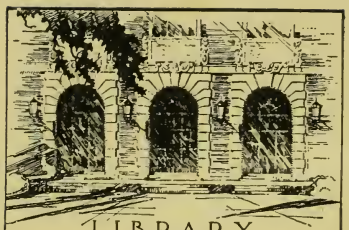

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NATURE'S NOBILITY.

NATURE'S NOBILITY.

A Novel

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By JOHN NEWALL.

VOL. I.

LONDON.
CHARING CROSS PUBLISHING COMPANY, LIMITED,
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DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF

AN

EVER DEAR SISTER,

WHO BRIGHTENED THE PATH SHE TROD, AND DIFFUSED

HAPPINESS AROUND HER.

VILLA MARIA,
EALING, JUNE 1st, 1879

Mrs. Res. Pam 190 p. 53 Holland-3v

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NATURE'S NOBILITY.

CHAPTER I.

THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES HAND IN HAND.

At mid-day the 16th of August, 1819, there were seen descending the snow white steps of a house in the Cathedral Close of Lumechester in Lancashire, two figures, so dissimilar in age and appearance, and withal so striking, that the passers-by instinctively stopped to gaze at them—the 18th and 19th centuries stood hand in hand. One was a boy, five years old, with an expressive face of the patrician type, and long hair falling in thick brown curls on his back. His lace frill, braided

velvet jacket and vest, and white worked drawers, all of expensive material and well made, showed that he was the pet of some fond mother, whilst his clear complexion and springy step indicated good health.

He was led by the hand by a tall portly old gentleman, up to whose face he looked with a beaming happy smile, full of confidence in his protector and delight at the prospect of a walk with him on that bright summer morning.

The elder one was a good specimen of the "fine old English gentleman" of the last century. He was eighty-five, and, notwithstanding his great age, was upright and full of health and vigour. He wore a snuff-coloured cloth suit, with silver buttons, much in the style of the court dress of the present day; white silk stockings, highly polished shoes, reaching to the ankle and fastened by large silver

buckles. The dress became his large well-made frame, shewing his handsome legs to advantage.

His hat was sobered down from the cocked hat of the last century to one somewhat of the shape of the clerical hat of our time. His hair, closely cut, was powdered; his face, expressive of honest good nature and perfect accord between the world and himself, was full, yet indicative of good birth, and its ruddy complexion well shown off by a rich lace cravat, fastened at the throat by a massive gold ring, containing the head of George III. in Minton ware, struck off on the accession to the throne of that good King at the early age of twenty-two; a monarch destined to pass through a more eventful and anxious period than any other occupant of the throne of England before or since, and whose high qualifications for the sove-

reignty are but little appreciated by the present generation. Amongst the convulsions, both political and social, during his reign, he stood erect and calm, never flinching from duty. The wonder is that his intellect withstood so long the intense strain upon it. For this good King the wearer of his portrait had the most intense admiration, which he very audibly expressed at his village church every Sunday on the reading of the prayer for the Royal Family, and not only did he consider it his own duty so to do, but he carefully watched those in the pews near him, to see if they were actuated by the same loyal feelings as himself, and his good-natured face had been seen on more than one occasion to contract itself into a stern look of rebuke when he fancied that he saw a half sneer on the countenance of a Radical-looking member of the congregation, and thereupon he would repeat

the "Amen" more loudly and emphatically than usual, looking the criminal full in the face. Our friend's life had been an easy one. An only son he entered upon his patrimony early, and, having made up his mind to a bachelor's life, he found the income, though not large, fully sufficient for his wants and to maintain his dignity of descent, for he came from an ancestry who for five hundred years had been landowners in the county of Lancaster, and carried their lineage by unusually clear proofs to the days of the Conquerer, one of whose stalwart knights had married the fair heiress from whom they traced their pedigree.

This pride of ancestry had always prevented Mr. Henry de Noel, for that was his name (but hereafter we shall call him Mr. Henry), from incurring any expenditure beyond his means.

Towards his later years he had, how-

ever, brought himself to purchase from a coach-builder of Lumechester, a large yellow family carriage, built for a country squire who had not the means to pay for it, and the builder, under the circumstances, and for ready cash, allowed him to become the purchaser at a greatly reduced figure. A pair of horses to match were, however, beyond his means; so when he determined to bring out his carriage he resorted to the use of post horses, then the recognised mode of locomotion for gentility, but now scarcely to be obtained if carefully searched for throughout the length and breadth of the land. The post-boy tribe he disliked in their natural state, he therefore had a livery made and carefully laid by, in which, on all needful occasions, he installed the post boy who undertook the temporary duties of coachman. The estate from which Mr. Henry derived his income was at Whicham in Cheshire,

some eight miles from Lumechester. He held it on lease, subject to a small rent, and he was the survivor of the three lives named in the last lease, and it was high time, considering his great age, that the lease should be renewed, and here was the pinch. Though he lived within his income yet he had not saved, and the great landowner, a Peer, required a larger sum as a fine for renewal than Mr. Henry could, without restricting his expenditure, command, and although he was anxious that the estate, which had been many generations in the family, should continue in it, he could not well see his way to paying the large sum demanded, and the knowledge of this was the "skeleton" which it is said exists in every man's house, and at times the ruddy cheek paled when he sat alone, and felt that the little fellow whom he led by the hand, and who was his godson, would not become his

successor to the estate. Yet he was too proud to avow his pecuniary position to anyone, lest it might be bruited abroad that he was not so rich as he was said to be.

On the estate there was a fine old mansion, which had formerly been occupied as the residence of the family which, prior to the purchase by the Peer, had owned the estate; and attached to it had formerly been some three thousand acres of land, of which about three hundred acres only remained.

It was a large and somewhat rambling structure, and was almost a mass of solid British oak. The farmer, whose father and grandfather before him had rented the estate, declared it to be 1,000 years old; but that, no doubt, was an exaggeration. The chief entrance fronted the high road to Lumechester, and over the door-way was a carved shield, or rather

what remained of one, with divers decayed and crumbling heraldic signs, quite unintelligible, and maintaining an uncertain existence thereon. It was wide, and must have been, in former days, very handsome, but the farmer used it for his own purposes, and a side entrance had been formed by a somewhat tasteful passage of tesselated woodwork (on and over which the honeysuckle and ivy had intertwined their tendrils), leading to a door which opened into a suite of rooms converted by Mr. Henry into very comfortable bachelor's quarters. He had separated them from the portion of the house occupied by the farmer, with the exception of one door way, which he kept locked, and only opened it to enable the farmer's wife, who had been a cook in the family, to superintend his simple culinary arrangements. His wants were chiefly attended to by an old man servant (also a bachelor), who had been

in the family many years, and was almost part of himself, and whose great ambition was to copy in his own person the scrupulous neatness of his master. The dining-room and library, on the ground floor, were large lofty rooms, with recessed windows, divided by mullions, and diamond shaped glass set in lead. The fire places had ingle nooks capacious enough to seat half-a-dozen on a cold winter's night. Outside the windows the clematis and other creeping plants struggled for predominance, and as there was no fair female hand to regulate and check their luxuriance, they to some extent interrupted the light of heaven from shining into the rooms. Solid beams of oak supported the ceilings; centuries had somewhat twisted and gnarled their original proportions, but they looked in keeping with everything else. The massive oak cornices and panellings had been painted over, not very artistically, in

oak colour, which, nevertheless, could not quite hide their original beauty. The oak flooring, of which a large margin was left outside a rich but somewhat faded carpet, was polished like a mirror. Old fashioned oak chairs and tables stood in the room, and on the latter, Joseph, the servant, was wont to arrange the simple flowers, which he reared in a small garden, reserved by his master from the rest of the tenant's holding, and where he contrived, owing to a southerly aspect, to rear rose trees which were the envy of the neighbourhood.

The old bachelor had not forgotten the sports of his earlier days. His gun, well cleaned by Joseph, rested on supports over the library mantel-piece; the portrait of a favourite hunter graced one end of the room, and that of a clever pointer the other end. Opposite the mantel-piece was the portrait of a young lady of exceeding beauty, who must have been, when the

two were young, of nearly the same age as himself, and a careful scrutiny of the portrait led one to trace a family likeness to Mr. Henry; but any question as to who she was so invariably brought tears into the good old man's eyes that his friends had long ceased to refer to the picture, but contented themselves with the supposition that it was the portrait of one he dearly loved, and so it was; it was the portrait of his sister. She had been the only companion of his childhood, and died in the bloom of youth, leaving her memory for ever engraved upon his heart as the sweetest and best woman that ever lived. He (and is it not a happiness to be able to do so?) could only imagine her, as her portrait faithfully represented her, a beautiful being, free from all the faults which, had she lived, she might have acquired, and as the most charming girls too often do acquire as they become acquain-

ted with the ways of the world and imbibe its follies and deceit. With so pure and ethereal an atmosphere did he surround her, that in his dreams he saw her hovering with angel's wings and murmuring blessings upon his head. He had aided a naturally strong constitution by a regular life, so that he could boast that he had never had a day's illness or taken a dose of physic in his life. His alcoholic tendencies were limited to ale, brewed by Joseph on the premises, and to a remarkable malt wine made by the same cunning hand, and which, after being kept two or three years, strongly resembled a very old Madeira seasoned by a voyage round the Cape, and for which, on the rare occasions that he invited his friends to his simple table, it was often taken. A massive oak staircase led from the ground floor to two spacious bedrooms immediately over the rooms below. One

room was occupied by himself, the other by Joseph.

The country around Whicham was exceedingly beautiful; soft rural scenery. The village lay very near the boundary between Lancashire and Cheshire. The striking difference between the two counties commenced at the very boundary, and was almost as marked as the difference between the two countries at the boundary between France and Spain. The trees on the Cheshire side seemed larger, the foliage greener, the population healthier and cleaner, and the well-dressed traveller could safely reckon upon the respectful touch of the hat and the humble "Good morning, sir."

No sooner was the boundary passed than the large enclosures, clipped hedges, good roads, smiling homesteads, and lowing cattle proclaimed the agricultural instead of the manufacturing element.

The feudal system existed in its modern-

ised spirit in the county of Chester. There, implicit faith in the squire had not been shaken by demagogues, or assailed by the influence of the lower class of dissenting preachers. The son succeeded the father in the farm, as if by right of descent on those ancestral estates. No intricate covenants in leases became the subject of angry discussion or expensive litigation, but there was the utmost confidence between landlord and tenant. If a tenant, from a succession of bad crops or loss of cattle by disease, felt himself unable to pay his rent, instead of attempting to clear off everything he could, at whatever sacrifice, and decamping to America or Australia, he would first address himself to the land steward; failing relief from that important personage, he would have recourse to a personal appeal to the landlord himself. Is it not a well accredited story that a great Cheshire marquis, noted for his love

of money, and at the same time for his well-placed generosity, rode up to a tenant's farm-house and addressed him thus: "I hear from my steward that you cannot pay your rent, that you have no money to keep up the farm properly; suppose now that I take the farm and you be my bailiff." The tenant joyfully acquiesced. The marquis found the capital, the bailiff honestly did his work, and at the end of three or four years the farm was handed over in a vastly improved and paying condition to the grateful tenant, with only a small addition to the rent for the outlay upon it. And did not the Earl of Whicham, under whom Mr. Henry held his estate, interest himself in the welfare of his numerous tenantry, treating them with a paternal kindness and a judicious liberality. And did not that great commoner reside near Whicham, whose father and grandfather had been offered a peerage and had

refused it, and considered it a higher honour to be plain Mr., and always represent the county in Parliament, than to be in the House of Peers; and did he not look upon his tenants as part of his family, and did they not return his kindness in quite a filial spirit, and treat a poacher from Lumechester with a primitive severity which kept those gentry at a respectful distance; for did not the stocks lie close to the village church, and did not the stout Cheshire yeomen disregard the moans and groans of the beaten and bruised poacher as he lay the long night through reflecting upon the disappointment of his ambitious projects. The nearest parallel case that we know of is that of the De Coucys, of the Chateau de Coucy, near Soissons. Though they intermarried with crowned heads, commanded armies, and within their own territories had the power of life and death, they chose to retain the

title of the "Sire de Coucy," and their pride in holding it is expressed in the following lines:—

Roi je ne suis
Ne prince ne Comte aussi
Je suis le Sire de Coucy.

Mr. Henry was often a guest at the palatial residences of his neighbours—his bonhomie and hearty unaffected manner, always regulated by innate good-breeding, made him very welcome, and his bearing to the high-born dames whom he there met was courtly, chivalrous, and highly deferential. His great age—he was born in 1734 when George II. was King—enabled him to speak of remarkable events in our annals, and *ore rotundo*, and with a slight Micawber tinge, he would speak of the great frost in the winter of 1740, for he happened to be in London at the time, after many days' journeying, in charge of an elderly aunt, who was engaged in a

heavy chancery suit after the fashion of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce.

He used to speak with enthusiasm of the battle of Dettingen in 1743, when 16,000 Englishmen, in conjunction with the same number of Hanoverians (who, however, took scarcely any part in the fight), under the personal command of George II., who rode along the line with his sword drawn encouraging his troops to fight for the honour of England, defeated the French army of 60,000, under the Duke de Noailles, inflicting a loss of 5,000.

He also remembered the attempted invasion of England by the French in 1744, and the still more serious event of the following year, when bonnie Prince Charlie landed in Scotland and made his way to Lumechester. On that occasion Mr. Henry played truant from the elderly aunt aforesaid, and, walking from Whicham to Lumechester,

was so struck with the picturesque costume of the Highlanders that had he been a little older he would have joined the Pretender's standard.

As it was he stayed so long in Lumechester to catch a sight of Prince Charlie, of whose appearance he used to speak in the highest terms in spite of his devotion to the Hanoverian dynasty, that had he not availed himself of the offer of a friendly farmer from Whicham to give him a seat in his light cart, he might have come to grief in the streets of Lumechester, where a good deal of excitement prevailed, and where the claymore did not rest altogether in its sheath. But his highest pleasure was to speak of the coronation of George III., which he had the good fortune to see, having been sent up to London by his elderly aunt to look after the Chancery suit.

He was then twenty-six, and his visit,

during which he had the pleasure to see his youthful sovereign, entirely effaced the effect produced on him by Prince Charlie. He described him as tall, with a good air, his features well formed, his complexion fair and countenance open and cheerful, with a great expression of goodness. It was then that he purchased the portrait in Minton ware which fastened his cravat. Ever afterwards he subscribed to the *Courier*, a London newspaper, published once a week, and which reached him at the earliest a week after publication; so that he was more conversant than the inhabitants of Whicham generally with the topics of the day, and was regarded as a great authority, and after church, which he attended every Sunday morning with the utmost punctuality, his neighbours took advantage of the occasion and drew from him his opinions of the state of the Empire, which he gave with the greatest

willingness, always concluding by warning his hearers against the Radical tendencies of the day. There was one Sunday, however, in the year when the neighbours with one accord avoided speaking to him; it was the anniversary of the death of that dear sister whose memory he cherished so much.

On that day the responses fell in a subdued tone from his lips, the erect frame was bent, the clear blue eye was dimmed, and after waiting until all the congregation had departed he would make his way to her tomb, and there place the wreath of flowers which he had prepared for the occasion.

CHAPTER II.

A NOBLE MERCHANT.

The house which, when our story opened, Mr. Henry was leaving with his little charge, was, as we have said, in the Cathedral Close of Lumechester, which on its northern side skirted the edge of the river that ran through the town. This having a considerable width and depth at all times, became, after a continued heavy fall of rain, a boiling torrent, rushing down with fearfully increased volume and impetus, and carrying with it too often the débris of destroyed buildings, and the cattle which it had, on a sudden rise, swept from the low-lying lands on its

banks. Near where the Cathedral stood, a copious stream, which at such time became a swollen torrent, dashed headlong into the river, and the two beat each other into a whirlpool of white foam. But usually they were quietly gliding waters, and though fast losing their purity, owing to the discharges from the manufactories which had already begun to settle on the banks above, they still retained sufficient to offer to the boy-sportsman a good bag of perch and dace on a favourable day. The two streams at this point formed a small peninsula, on which stood the Cathedral and its surrounding buildings, including an ancient institution, founded by a former merchant of Lumechester, where about 60 boys, clad in the picturesque costume of the time of Henry VIII., were brought up in a gothic structure of very ancient date, formerly a monastery, full of charmingly

antique rooms and passages, with a most valuable collection of books and ancient manuscripts, arranged along the walls of an oak-panelled library, a perfect specimen of monkish architecture and comfort, open daily to all visitors, whether for the purposes of literature or curiosity.

The Close formed a kind of half circle about the Cathedral, with a handsome old gateway leading into the town. There was no carriage road in the Close, but a broad, well-flagged footway extended between the Cathedral railings and the houses. The house referred to was on the northerly side of the Close, and stood on a rock some fifty feet above the river, to the edge of which the well-kept garden extended, where it was bounded by a high wall, on the top of which were arranged vases filled with choice flowers. The front of the house, which looked towards the Cathedral, presented a handsome

appearance, having been erected in the early part of the 16th century by some resident of the town of position and means. A massive doorway, with oak door to match, led into a wide hall with solid oak flooring, the centre of which was covered by oilcloth of rich but sombre hue, which, under the influence of some polish of great efficiency, presented a surface shining like glass. On either side stood a large basin of fine earthenware, supported on a bronze tripod, and filled with choice flowers. To the right and left opened the dining-room and library, the walls of each of polished old oak, and the furniture massive, and though of ancient date in excellent preservation; carpets of the richest make and suitable colour covered the floors. The dining-room was higher by a step at the upper end than at the lower, forming a däis, the lower end being entered by a separate door. Paintings by ancient

masters covered the walls. In the library massive book-cases, filled with handsomely-bound books, fitted appropriate recesses. The mantel-piece in each room was high and wide, made of old British oak, and covered with well-executed carvings of birds, fruits, and flowers. At the end of the hall a large double glass door disclosed the drawing room, which burst upon the view in marked contrast with the sober-looking hall and dining room and library. In the latter the sober taste of a man could be traced—in the former the taste of a refined woman alive to the influence of colour could be discovered. The oak panels had been covered with light-blue paper, elaborately worked in with gold, the panels being bordered with suitable designs in oil painting, illustrating the flowers peculiar to each month. The large oak beams which covered the ceiling at right angles with the room had

been so "picked out," in a beautiful combination of gold and colouring, that they added to instead of marring the general effect. Rich curtains, surmounted by elaborately carved gilt cornices, from which depended fringe of the most costly character, ornamented the windows, which had been deepened so as to touch the floor, and the former antiquated glass had been removed, and large plate glass, then an expensive luxury, had been substituted. Well executed water colour drawings, after Watteau, hung in the centre of each panel. A noble mantel-piece of purest marble, with figures of shepherds and shepherdesses and their attendant flocks, was the work of an Italian artist, who had brought his taste and his poverty to the town of Lumechester, and who, for a sum which to him appeared boundless wealth, designed and executed the work. Poor fellow! He had finished his work and received the reward of his labour,

and kneeling, to take a farewell of that which to him had been a labour of love, he then and there breathed his last; the cold climate of Lumechester and the smoke of its manufactories had been too much for the delicate child of the sunny South. The richest carpet which the looms of Turkey could produce covered the floor, and gave a warmth which a northerly aspect specially required. A large mirror over the mantel-piece, another on a console table opposite, and one at each end of the room gave additional width and breadth to what was of itself a noble apartment. Exquisite flowers, intermixed with richly-bound books, stood on inlaid tables of beautiful workmanship and design, and on a separate one made for the purpose was a splendid silver vase, the inscription on which showed that it was the gift of grateful friends. Between the window curtains, as if set in picture-frames, were seen well-arranged flower-beds,

carefully planned to correspond with the prevailing colour of the room. The owner of this mansion was Mr. Robert De Noel, a second cousin of Mr. Henry, and the father of little Lawrence de Noel, the boy who stood on the steps holding the hand of his godfather. The father and mother of Mr. Robert de Noel (whom we shall call Mr. Robert) died when he was very young, and his brothers and sisters, of whom he had several, had also died before he had himself attained twelve years of age, and he was thus left under the guardianship of a trustee named in his father's will, who also died when he was only fifteen; and on the estate of the trustee being investigated it was found that the boy's patrimony, which was considerable, had been squandered, and that the estate was insolvent. He was from his childhood of a strongly religious turn of mind, and whilst only a schoolboy

had distinguished himself by a regular attendance at the church of the Rev. Dr. Smyley, who was the great organ of the Low Church party in the town of Lumechester, and to whose ministrations flocked in overflowing congregations the members of the Church of England who wavered between adhering to its doctrines and joining the Dissenters, and who discovered in Dr. Smyley's extemporaneous and fervent sermons a kind of balm for their dislike of the loose and almost irreverent manner in which the services of the Church of England were then too frequently conducted.

Besides the doctor's qualifications as a pulpit orator, he was a constant and systematic caller at the house of every member of his congregation, and in this most essential duty of a clergyman he was ably supported by his wife, whose well-timed attentions to the poorer members of his flock in case of

sickness were, though flavoured with a certain amount of eccentricity, greatly appreciated; but the afflicted ones could not always understand why, before they were allowed to taste the dainties which she brought, they were compelled to listen to readings of portions of Dr. Smyley's sermons, and to somewhat unmusical renderings of Dr. Smyley's hymns, to which was not unfrequently added an extemporaneous prayer by Mrs. Smyley. The misfortune which had befallen Mr. Robert soon became known amongst the congregation, and their sympathy was large and general, and it resulted in the offer by one of the members of a position in his business of merchant in Lumechester, which provided for his simple wants.

His admirable bearing in the new life into which he was thus thrown attracted general respect, for it was well known that he was of gentle birth, and that his an-

cestors had not had occasion to enter into trade. He had scarcely attained twenty-one when the merchant who had befriended him died, and so much had he even then gained the confidence of the business connection, that it not only remained with him but thrived rapidly under his conduct of it. He was extremely reserved, spoke little, but that little was to the point, and avoided "the vacant laugh that speaks the empty mind;" indeed he seldom ever smiled. Companions he had not, even in his youthful days. If he ever unbent himself so far as to pass an hour or two in conversation, it was generally with some minister of the Church of England or of the Dissenters, and was chiefly on religious matters. His faith was pure and simple. He hated doctrinal discussions, sects and creeds were as nothing to him. The Bible alone, read in its literal and natural sense, contained the articles of faith which were his guide.

He was as willing to attend a dissenting chapel as an episcopal church, and his hand was equally open to the calls of either. He began life with a determination to have God before his eyes at all times. Before leaving his bedroom in a morning he engaged in private devotion—and then summoning all his household, without exception, into the drawing-room, he implored the aid and blessing of the Almighty during the day in a manner at once simple, eloquent, and reverential. Then hopefully going forth after the morning meal he gave every nerve to the struggle with the world. Strong in his attachments, generous in disposition, whilst firm in character, he managed to infuse into those around him great zeal in the discharge of their duties. His employés, both in his business and in his household, had all been many years in his service, several from twenty to thirty years. We are

told that the Earl of Northumberland of the reign of Henry VII., wrote a book of direction for the management of his household, called the Northumberland Household Book, in which the Earl entered into the most minute particulars. He even directed the number of fagots to be allowed to each fire, and what the man-servants were to have for their breakfast, and what was to be provided for his own. His household consisted of 166 persons. Whether Mr. Robert had ever read of the methodical habits of the Earl, or whether his own good sense pointed out the advantage of such order in a household, at all events each servant had a list of duties to be performed during the day, and another was placed in the capacious kitchen and in a recess in the hall of the arrangement for the day's meals; for though nothing like in number that of the Earl's, Mr. Robert's household was large, compris-

ing, as it did, and as was the custom in those days, the clerks employed in his business.

In appearance Mr. Robert was under the medium size, but symmetrically built; his fine aquiline nose gave an aristocratic look to his face, which was thin and pale and rather expressive of sternness. His hair was very dark, cut short, and carefully dressed. He was clothed in a black suit, avoiding the gilt buttons, knee breeches, and top boots generally worn by the young men of the day. His white cravat, neatly tied, and the long ends brought down over the shirt front, was fastened by a gold brooch. His boots were faultless in shape and polish. When, at the age of twenty-four, he found himself able to support a wife, he took to himself one in every way calculated to conduce to his happiness. She also was of good birth, her mother being a member of one of the best and most celebrated

families in Ireland, but she herself was born in England. She was only seventeen when she married, and at the date of our story was thirty-five, her husband being forty-one. She was of medium height, her figure graceful, and her delicate features were expressive of great goodness of heart and intelligence. From the day that she gave her hand to Mr. Robert she loved him with unbounded devotion, and he returned her affection with equal ardour. Mr. Henry was second cousin to Mr. Robert, and not much intercourse was kept up between them until Mr. Robert had attained an acknowledged position as a merchant. One thing had caused coolness between them; an aunt of Mr. Robert, who was also a cousin of Mr. Henry, had on her death bequeathed the rising young merchant a legacy of seven hundred pounds, whilst she left nothing to Mr. Henry. This

seven hundred pounds laid the foundation of Mr. Robert's fortune, for it enabled him to go into the market and dispense with credit.

This was immensely in his favour, as he could decline all the solicitations of the manufacturers, and the seductions they exercised in the shape of good dinners and potent wines, for which he had no taste. Fortune favoured his efforts, and his reputation for being a man of means was supplemented by a reputation for being also a man of the highest truthfulness and integrity. His success by no means altered his character or his habits. He maintained the same reserve towards those who approached him, and those who, for their own objects, sought to obtain his favour by flattery went away repulsed.

About five years before our story opens Mr. Robert learnt that the house in the Close could be bought at a sum which he

could spare for the purpose. He had often gazed wistfully at it, for it reminded him of the house at Whicham, where he had frequently visited Mr. Henry, and hoped that some day he might become the owner, and the wish was gratified.

It was the taste of Mrs. Robert that had transformed the drawing room from a dull apartment into the elegant "salon" we have described; as to the remainder of the house she was too much a woman of sense to seek to alter its practical arrangements.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert had at the time the story commences seven children. They were all comely and healthy; and surrounded by his family, and with every comfort and indeed luxury in his house, he found there the only pleasures in which he delighted. Social meetings at the leading hotels were much indulged in by the merchants of Lumechester, and not a few

bargains were made which astonished both buyers and sellers on the following morning, when they looked into these after-dinner business transactions; but the domestic happiness of his home and his high moral character fortunately rescued Mr. Robert from the temptations which were the ruin of many. The dishonesty of his guardian had prevented him receiving that education to which he was by birth and patrimony entitled, and he decided that no expense should be spared to render his children worthy of the position which by the aid of a kind Providence he trusted they would occupy. His eldest daughter, then fourteen years old, had the features and disposition of her mother, and was, even at that early age, a helpmate to her in the management of the household.

His eldest son he destined for a University career. His second son, a high-spirited little fellow, as mischievous as Puck, and

the leader in all schoolboy pranks, was to be in his own business. Two sweet girls intervened, and then came little Lawrence, whom we have introduced to the reader, followed by the baby. Mr. Robert had, however, a source of great anxiety in the delicacy of his dear wife. He thought that her face grew paler and her little hands thinner day by day, and his frame trembled at the thought of losing her; for he had a conviction that such a calamity was possible, and he earnestly questioned the doctor, who now attended her daily, and though he was assured by him that he need be under no apprehension, he still felt a sinking at heart, and prayed to his God to avert such a blow.

CHAPTER III.

A MOB.

Mr. Henry had received an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Roberts to visit them, a repetition of a visit, which, for many years past, the former had paid annually to the Close, and it was to take place on the 15th of August and continue for a fortnight. It was always an exciting event, not only to Mr. Henry but also to Joseph, and involved an amount of trouble and anxiety to the latter not easily described.

The yellow coach had to be thoroughly cleaned up, the wheels taken off and oiled, and the harness, which was elaborately studded with brass, highly polished. Arrangements

had to be made with the landlord of the "Spotted Deer" at Whicham for two of his best post horses, to befit the very handsome but somewhat unwieldy carriage, which, with its weighty hammercloth, could not have justice done to it by any puny steeds, however spirited they might be. This involved much negotiation and bargaining with the landlord aforesaid, who, looking upon Mr. Henry as a "real gentleman," was somewhat disposed to raise his terms, and it was not until Joseph had plainly hinted that it was possible to get horses from Lumechester that Boniface could be brought to terms, and this was not effected until almost the last moment, although the negotiation had been commenced on the arrival of the invitation on the 1st of August. The place in which the coach was kept had not been originally intended for a coach-house, but there was ample room and to spare, and a covering supplied by the coach-builder had

always been deemed sufficient to preserve the coach from being seriously affected by damp. The harness was hung upon supports projecting from the wooden partition separating the coach-house from the stables in which Moore, the tenant of the farm, kept his horses. Upon this particular occasion Joseph's temper and patience were sorely tried. It was many months since the coach had been in use, and its great weight had so pressed on the unsound wooden flooring of the coach-house, that all Joseph's individual efforts to drag it out entirely failed, and with much reluctance he was obliged to ask Moore for the loan of one of his horses to assist him, a favour which was rather grudgingly granted, as Mr. Henry and his tenant had had that day a little tiff on the subject of an allowance for some repairs.

On putting the animal to work, having first harnessed him to the bar, he gave such

a strong pull that, owing probably to the box of the wheel being rusty, he twisted the iron work on the off side before he could get the wheel out of the hole in which it had imbedded itself. This did not increase Joseph's equanimity of temper, and he blamed the carter for the misfortune. It involved the coach being placed under the hands of the village blacksmith, who undertook to put it to rights, and who, as may be supposed, failed in his promise, but without informing the unsuspecting Joseph. Besides all these anxieties, Mr. Henry's visiting suit had to be furbished up, and the laced cravats, silk stockings, buckles and shoes, looked to, and this quite independent of his own attire, in regard to which he was equally particular. What interval remained he devoted to informing the neighbours of his intended departure, especially impressing upon the postman the necessity of imme-

diately forwarding all letters and newspapers to the house in the Close. It was arranged that they should start at eleven o'clock on the morning of the fifteenth, so as to secure arrival at the Close before the dinner hour, which at Lumechester even in the best houses was one o'clock. Joseph had, to the perfect satisfaction of himself, got ready the coach and harness, and at ten o'clock stepped across to the "Spotted Deer" to see that the steeds were ready to be put to. What was his chagrin to find that one of the horses had been taken ill in the night, and was unable to do the job. Although the "Spotted Deer" possessed other horses, they were all out and not expected back until late at night. What was to be done? His master's character, his own, and that of Whicham generally were at stake; for was it to be said in the Radical town of Lumechester, that Whicham, the aristocratic and select, the abode of an Earl, and the champion of the Tory interest, could

not turn out a pair of post horses. Under the pressure of intense feeling Joseph asked himself what was to be done. Moore, the farmer, had a white horse which would not be a bad match for the capable horse at the "Spotted Deer," but numerous questions arose. Would Moore, after the tiff, let them have it? Could it be clipped and singed—for it was as rough as a bear—in any reasonable time? Could it then be washed? Could its big farmshoes be changed for those of a carriage horse? Joseph rose to the occasion, and boldly facing Moore, obtained, after much negociation (carrying his point only by the aid of Mrs. Moore), the concession of the horse for the day; then, instructing the blacksmith to make the shoes, Joseph, with the aid of the ostler of the "Spotted Deer," set to work to clip, singe, and wash the animal. Well, here he had his work to do; the horse, unaccustomed to such tender solicitude, declined to be made nice and clean, and

especially expressed his dissatisfaction at the singeing operation, and numerous buckets of warm water and soap were kicked over before the application had taken proper effect on his hide. This being at last accomplished, Joseph took him to the blacksmith, who, after many struggles (for the animal had by this time got excited), put on the new shoes. The pair being attached to the carriage, the luggage having been put in the boot, and the coachman (alias post boy) having ascended the box, a start was made. But what was Joseph's indignation when he found that the off fore wheel commenced what is called "wobbling," and to such an extent as to excite the laughter of the little group of idlers who had collected to see the squire start for London. Mr. Henry himself, who was seated in a dignified position in the yellow carriage, was at a loss to conceive the cause of the merriment, and called on the coachman to stop, and ordered

Joseph to descend from the box. On learning the state of the case he good-naturedly said that it could not be helped, and told Joseph to make the best of a bad job. But Joseph's spirit was grieved all the way; the white horse was given to shying and jibbing; the turnpike man, who had watched the peculiar movement of the fore wheel, as it approached the gate, enquired whether he intended to pay extra for a wheel which was on both sides of the road at once; but the most unkind cut of all was from a rough-looking man at the entrance to Lumechester, who stood with a small bull and terrier dog under his arm, and shouted out,

"I say, felly, thou'd better take this little dog to help thee on."

The slow pace they came at, together with the loss of time before starting, had delayed their arrival until long after the dinner hour at the Close. Mr. Robert's ser-

vant, however, who had long been waiting at the gateway for the carriage, assured the visitor that this would be no inconvenience, and that dinner would be on the table in a few minutes.

Ordering the coachman to leave the carriage at the coach-builder's, Mr. Henry walked to the Close, followed by the servant with the luggage. Mr. Robert was at business, having, after waiting some time, deputed his wife to receive his cousin. She received him in the hall with that peculiar grace and hearty greeting which was her characteristic; whilst he, on the other hand, bowing low, took her left hand and kissed it, and then saluted the children with the same respect as if they had been adults, until he came to little Lawrie, whom he addressed as "my dear Master Lawrie. I hope you too are quite well," and bending down kissed the child.

In a few minutes a nice dinner was

placed before the old gentleman, and, as his godson, Lawrie was allowed to sit at the table.

"My dear Madam," said Mr. Henry, as he sipped the soup, "I hope that your worthy husband is well."

"Thank you, cousin, he is quite well; but I think that he feels rather anxious about the state of things here; trade is so dull and the hands show such a bad spirit—he is much afraid they mean mischief."

"Ah, my dear Madam, I always prophesied that no good would come of this manufacturing that is going on now; what do we want, I should like to know, with all this cotton spinning and calico making? I have lived, my dear Madam, many years, and think that all that kind of thing should be left to Frenchmen and such outlandish people."

"But, cousin, what are we to do without it? People want cotton cloth and calico,

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and if we won't make it other countries will, and we shall be out of the market, and it is said that these things which you despise so much will add greatly to the wealth of England."

"My dear Madam, I never could argue with a lady, especially with one so good as you are."

And then the subject was dropped. Having pronounced the soup excellent, he turned to little Lawrie.

"Dear Master Lawrie, can you read?" said he.

"Oh yes, Godpapa; Ma has taught me to read the Bible, and I know all about Jonah in the whale's belly."

The old gentleman, whose Bible-reading had been rather neglected, said, as he sliced the fish,

"Do you know how he got there, Master Lawrie?"

"Yes, Godpapa; he was very naughty, so

the people put him out of the ship and the whale swallowed him."

"Indeed. Well, I think, Lawrie, it is our turn now, so by your leave I will swallow the fish," and, suiting the action to the word, lifted a nice piece of Ribble salmon to his mouth.

The meeting of the two cousins in the evening, when Mr. Robert returned from his business, was sincerely kind and even affectionate on both sides. On hearing the knock, Mr. Henry went from the drawing-room, where he had been listening to some sacred music which Mrs. Robert had been playing with much taste on one of Broadwood's best, then just coming into fashion, and advanced to meet his cousin in the hall.

"My very dear Sir," said Mr. Henry, "I thank you for your kind invitation to your hospitable mansion."

"My dear cousin," said Mr. Robert, grasp-

ing him warmly by the hand, "you are sincerely welcome; it is a pleasure to keep up a good feeling with so esteemed a relative."

The reign of good King George the Third culminated in gloom. The manufacturing industries of the country had attained large proportions, and the labouring classes engaged in them began to feel their own power, and when want of employment and its attendant distress befell them, they loudly charged the landlords and the corn laws as being the cause. The landlords, in their turn, looked down on the manufacturers' interests and their workmen as temporary excrescences, not required for England's good, and treated the arguments forcibly used by the leaders of the working men, Cobbett and others, as new-fangled doctrines only worthy of contempt.

The glories of Waterloo had paled before the heavy taxes imposed to pay the

expenses of the war. The Court was unpopular, and Lancashire was teeming with discontent and insurrectionary feelings. On the 16th August arrangements had been made by the popular leaders for a monster meeting in the town of Lumechester. A son of Moore, the tenant at Whicham, was one of the under-gamekeepers on the Earl of Whicham's estate, and some time before had been severely wounded by poachers from Lumechester in an affray in which both parties used their guns very freely. Young Moore was severely wounded, and was carried off the next day to the Infirmary at Lumechester, where he there lay suffering severely from his wound. Mr. Henry had been requested by Mrs. Moore to be the bearer of some little comforts and a small purse of money for her son, and the squire had promised to see him at the Infirmary and hand over the gifts and say some kind words to

cheer him up. So, in accordance with his pledge, Mr. Henry, as he stood on the door steps of the house in the Close with little Lawrie, the day after his arrival, looked down on the boy, and said,

"Master Lawrie, we will, if you please sir, go to the Infirmary to see young Tom Moore."

"To the Infirm-inry," replied little Lawrie, mis-pronouncing "Infirmary." "But, God-papa, why do you wish to go amongst all those dirty people? Let us go and see if there are any fish in the river; nurse showed me some last week above there"—pointing towards some green fields which at a short distance from the Close ran down to the river side.

"My little man," said Mr. Henry, "we will go there another day, but I promised Tom's mother I would go this very morning."

Assisted by a stout gold-headed cane, which

his great age rendered a necessary adjunct, and with his left hand holding little Lawrie's right, and his tall figure held erect, he strode along the Close and passed through the gate leading into the town. So soon as they passed through this, they found themselves in the busy throng of a large manufacturing town. It was the dinner hour for the mill hands, and crowds of unwashed, unkempt children employed in the factories were hurrying to their homes to snatch a hasty meal, then back to the tall grim buildings where they earned their daily bread. There were no laws then in force for regulating the employment of children in factories, and some of those they met were infants no older than little Lawrie himself; their pale faces and attenuated frames told of the many hours' work in the day they had to go through. In many instances their clothes were mere rags, and as they passed Mr. Henry and his

charge, one of the urchins said to another,

"Sithee, Bill! didst ever see such a foine little chap;" and they both stopped to wonder at his fine apparel.

"My eyes," said one of a group of workmen that stood at the corner of the street, after looking intently at Mr. Henry, "I reckon he's out of th' The-a-ter."

And thus they passed along, gazed at by everyone they met as beings of a different order to themselves. Turning to the left, after traversing the first street, they found themselves in the principal street of Lumechester. The present generation look upon Lumechester as a new town, brought into existence by the cotton manufacture, when in truth it is one of the most ancient towns in the kingdom. It was a fortified town in the time of the Romans, who had a large camp there. The principal street was at the time we write long and narrow; the

footways could scarcely be called such—they were utterly insufficient for the mass of foot passengers at that hour struggling homewards, and the larger proportion were driven into the roadway, where they got mixed up in a crowd of vehicles of all kinds, the confusion being not a little increased by the London coach having just arrived, and it was as much as the driver could do to navigate through the crowd without running over somebody. Mr. Henry began to regret having come out at this hour, and would gladly, had he been able, have retraced his steps and complied with Lawrie's longing for the green fields and the fish; but he found it impossible, so he took shelter with Lawrie in the doorway of a shop, permission being readily accorded by the proprietor, who instantly took off his hat to the old gentleman, a token of respect then going out of fashion amongst the Lumechester trades-

men. Here he remained until the commotion caused by the "Highflyer" had subsided, and meanwhile he gazed at the old buildings opposite, which, though he had seen them on his annual visits, always had an interest for him. Those of our readers who have been in the Jews' street at Frankfort, or are acquainted with the old towns in Spain, will be able to form an idea of the principal street of Lumechester at that time.

The buildings bent forward in affectionate respect for those on the opposite side, each storey projecting over the one beneath it until the culminating point was reached, when they almost seemed to join heads together.

The ground floor had, in nearly every case, been turned into a shop. To some there was a descent, in others an ascent. Some of the old windows had been left, in other cases large plate-glass panes (then very ex-

pensive) gave a touch of modern style to the buildings.

Here and there, but in very few cases, the old buildings had been replaced by modern brick structures of the most tasteless character. It was clear that sooner or later the hand of the destroyer would sweep away all these picturesque old piles. Such has been the case, for not a vestige now remains of them, or of the fine old buildings on the northerly side of the Close. Several other streets in the immediate vicinity of the Cathedral partook of the same ancient character, but they too have disappeared, and if any Lumechester Rip van Winkle were now to find himself in his native town, the changes would seem to him as great as those which astonished the Dutchman after his long sleep. He would see, for instance, standing on the very site of the building on which Mr. Henry looked with such interest, one of the most splen-

did and convenient "Exchanges" in the world, a structure in which architectural beauty goes hand in hand with practical utility. This site belonged to Mr. Robert, and some years ago was sold by his children to the Exchange Company for nearly £50,000, a sum which, in those days, would have been thought a fabulous price.

The High-street having become less crowded, Mr. Henry and Lawrie continued their way towards the Infirmary, which stood facing the top of High-street, but divided from it by Mornington-street branching off at right angles and forming one of the modern additions to the town.

Country visitors to a large town are sensible of a kind of "roar" which begins with the early morn and continues until midnight, and keeps up a nervous excitement by the habitual residents unfelt. We who write in the quiet seclusion of a rural village freely confess to the

distinct effect on our nerves of this "roar" whenever we enter the great city. This "roar" dinned the hearing of Mr. Henry, and produced a kind of stupefaction, under which he clutched almost convulsively the hand of little Lawrie as he was on the point of crossing High-street to Morning-ton-street, and thence to the Infirmary. But here their progress was stayed. An immense mob, rushing wildly up Morn-ington-street caught them in its vortex, and they were whirled round. Mr. Henry lifted up his little charge, but he was vio-lently seized from his arms, and he him-self was thrust, minus his gold-headed cane, against a door that was instantly forced open by the weight of the crowd, and bruised, stunned, and partially insen-sible, he was flung violently into the en-trance of an hotel in the High-street. The people of the house very kindly assisted him to rise, brought him a resto-

rative, and led him into one of the rooms, where, as soon as he could recover his senses, he set to work to describe little Lawrie, and offered a handsome reward for his recovery. The "boots," a good-natured fellow, instantly sallied forth to inquire after the lost boy, but he returned in a few minutes with the depressing news that the street had been cleared by the Yeomanry, and that there was scarcely a soul to be seen. The monster meeting before referred to had been attended by some 80,000 people, a large proportion of whom were women, and it consisted of workpeople from the neighbouring towns as well as those of Lumechester. Waggons had been placed in the centre of a large open space at the western end of Mornington-street, and by means of planks these had been converted into a platform, from which speeches of a violent and seditious character had been made by the ringleaders of the mob.

The authorities had only learnt the intention to hold the meeting late in the morning, there were no regular troops in the town, and in a state of despair they hastily summoned to their aid some troops of Yeomanry Cavalry, Cheshire as well as Lancashire. These men, chiefly young farmers, having no sympathy with demagogues or their victims, at the word of command charged with right good will up to the platform, scattering the mob in wild confusion. They easily cleared the platform with their sabres, with the exception of one man, tall, of broad shoulders and of military bearing, who, with only a stout stick, parried the cuts of the soldiers; but, finding himself unsupported, he sprang from the platform and joined the rest in their flight. The affrighted mob then rushed towards every outlet, the principal body surging up Mornington-street and engulphing Mr. Henry and Lawrie.

CHAPTER IV.

DISTRACTION.

On receiving "boots'" report, Mr. Henry sent him to the Close with a verbal message to Mrs. Robert, to the effect that they had been involved in a mob and had taken refuge at the "Crown and Cushion" until the streets were quieter, but that, as soon as they were, they would make their way to the Close. But before the messenger arrived Mrs. Robert had heard of the *émeute*, and questioned him closely, and compelled him to admit that Lawrie was not at the "Crown and Cushion," and that he had not at the time he left there been found. Not staying to put on her walking

dress, but simply taking her bonnet, which lay ready to hand, she hurried alone to the police-office in great agitation, to make enquiries respecting her little son and his protector. In those days the "Peelers" had not been organised. The paid constables who kept watch on the criminal classes went by the name of "runners" and corresponded to the modern detectives.

The runners of Lumechester were celebrated for their powerful frames, daring, and intelligence. No odds appalled them. Any one of them would alone enter a room filled with desperate characters, and singling out the man he wanted drag him forth at any risk. In one case one of them had tracked three men whom he had to arrest into the mountains of Yorkshire, and found them at a lone road-side tavern, far away from any dwelling where he could seek assistance. He unhesitatingly walked into the room where they sat, and demanded their

surrender, on which one of them struck him on the shoulder with a bludgeon; this he returned by felling his assailant senseless to the ground with his truncheon; he turned just in time to grapple with another, whom he threw heavily, being a Kendal man, his head coming in contact with the grate, and putting him *hors de combat;* the third rushed at him with a knife; he seized him by the wrist of the hand that held it, and driving the end of his truncheon into his temples knocked him over the table, then without the loss of an instant put the "bracelets" upon all three and marched them off. The "Charlies," as they were called, to whom were entrusted the lives and property of the inhabitants of Lumechester during the hours of the night, were almost without exception men who accepted the post as a kind of sinecure. Old Tombs, the midnight guardian of the Close, entered nightly upon

his functions with his head enveloped in a formidable woollen nightcap, surrounded by a very broad-brimmed hat, a lantern, and a large bull and terrier dog. He was between sixty and seventy and very rheumatic.

As regarded him the words of Virgil were specially applicable, "Vox et prœterea nihil." In bandying abuse with a midnight brawler he was unequalled. The loud harsh tones in which he called the hours grated on the ear and banished slumber. How different to the musical tones in which the watchmen of Toledo chant the hour, adding "and may God preserve you"—a fine bass taking the third to an equally fine tenor.

When Mrs. Robert reached the police office she found all the men exhausted with their efforts during the morning, but knowing her husband well by name they expressed their utmost solicitude about the safety of her child, and promised to make

every effort to recover him, and with this poor satisfaction the distressed mother was for the time compelled to be content; from thence she hastened to the "Crown and Cushion," and found Mr. Henry in a state that for the moment almost drowned her anxiety about her son.

"It was all my fault, my dear Madam," he exclaimed, "for dear little Lawrie wanted me to go with him to the meadows to look after the fish, and I was so cruel as to refuse, though I must say, my dear cousin, in excuse, that Tom Moore's mother had made me promise to see him at the Infirmary to-day with a little purse. Tom has been badly shot by those cursed poachers, and we were on our way there when that confounded mob of furious Radicals came rushing up, followed by those fine fellows the Yeomanry, and the dear little fellow, though I did take him in my arms, was swept from me, and do

all I could I have not seen or heard anything of him since. And, my dear Madam, do believe me when I say that I would give my own life at this moment if I could restore him to you."

And with that the kind-hearted old gentleman, who had been crying more or less since he lost Lawrie, burst afresh into tears, and sobbed as if his heart would break. Mrs. Robert took her cousin by the hand and said,

"Dear cousin, God will protect my boy. I leave the matter in His hands. His will be done"—with that she helped him to rise from his seat, took his arm affectionately, and gently led him from the "Crown and Cushion" towards her home.

There was an ominous silence in High-street; all the shop windows were closed, a few Yeomanry patrolling up and down. One of these, a young farmer from Whicham, riding up to them and saluting Mr. Henry,

offered his services as an escort home, without asking "the Squire" how it was that he looked so downcast and so unlike himself, but with many thanks they declined his kindness. Arrived at the Close they found Mr. Robert, who had left his place of business and hastened home. His wife threw herself into his arms, exclaiming, "God's will be done, Robert," and then in a few hurried and broken sentences told him all. Mr. Robert turned ghastly pale, but his self-possession did not leave him for a moment. He asked his wife whether she had offered a reward for the recovery of his lost child, and finding that she had not, he took his pen and wrote as follows:—

"To the Chief-Constable of Lumechester. I will pay one hundred pounds reward for the recovery of my child, Lawrence de Noel."

Then handing this to a servant, with

strict injunctions to deliver it to the Chief-Constable in person, he sat down perfectly calm, and endeavoured to extract from Mr. Henry all the circumstances. This was no easy matter, as Mr. Henry's nerves were so shaken by the events of the day that he seemed almost incompetent to give any correct and intelligible account of the disappearance of the child. On being questioned closely by his cousin as to whether he had let the boy drop from his arms or whether he had been forcibly taken from him, he brought himself to remember that a big burly man in shirt sleeves, with a tall masculine woman by his side, had seized the boy, exclaiming, "The Lord hath given him into my hands."

Mr. Robert, immediately after extracting from Mr. Henry the information mentioned above, forwarded it to the police-office by one of the clerks. And on the note being

handed to the Chief-Constable, the clerk observed the countenance of the latter light up, as if he had received a communication of importance, and on his return, being asked by Mr. Robert if the Chief-Constable had said anything, he replied, "Not a word," but said that he had immediately rung his bell, in answer to which there entered a tall, bronzed man of powerful frame and determined look, but having nothing of the constable in his appearance, to whom he whispered something, and then added in his usual tone "immediately," on which the man answered, "Yes, sir," and left the room.

Mr. Robert calmly thought over all eventualities, and looking at the lawless character of the ringleaders of the mob, at the fact that some of them had a reward for their apprehension hanging over their heads, and that possibly force might be needed to rescue his child, he summoned his clerks

and man-servant into the dining-room, and addressed them thus:—

"You all know the terrible calamity that has befallen me and my dear wife" —when he referred to his wife he knew that he touched a chord in each heart, for her kindness and consideration towards them had endeared her to all. "If you have partaken of my prosperity"—he referred to his custom of giving a gratuity to each of them, in proportion to the successful business results of the year— "I hope you will aid me in my adversity, and that you will even undergo some danger, if necessary, in assisting me to recover our lost child. One or two amongst you are too old to go through much exertion, and from those I expect only sympathy."

The senior clerk, whose eyes full of tears, and trembling voice showed how much he felt, replied,

"Dear sir, we do indeed feel for you, and every one of us, old and young," and he turned towards the others, "will go through fire and water to serve you and our dear mistress. Only tell us what you wish us to do, and we will, with God's help, do it, even if it be to the loss of our lives." With one voice the others exclaimed, "We will."

Mr. Robert knew what an overwhelming task the constables had had to perform that day, that they must be nearly worn out, and that the aid of half-a-dozen able-bodied men, animated by such a spirit, might in an emergency be invaluable. Moreover, with the exception of the senior clerk, who had been with him from the time he commenced business, and his man-servant, they were all in the prime of manhood, and as he had encouraged them in daily pedestrian exercise, of which he was himself extremely fond, they were, if

not in good training, at least in fair condition, and all being north country men, and two of them from Cumberland, they often amused themselves before breakfast with the gloves and wrestling in the green meadow abutting on the river. Owing to the spirit of disaffection which had long prevailed, they, along with the clerks in most of the mercantile establishments in Lumechester, had been sworn in as special constables, and each had his constable's staff hanging at his bed-head, and they had upon more than one occasion turned out to help the authorities in maintaining order.

Mr. Robert pointed out to them that they might be called upon to aid in arresting some of the ringleaders, for he had a strong suspicion that his child had been carried off by one of them as a hostage for his own pardon, and he felt sure that they would never be captured without a

desperate struggle and some bloodshed. They kindly but firmly requested that he would not consider their safety but only that of the boy, and that they were prepared to run all risks, whatever they might be.

Mr. Robert then requested them to be ready at any hour of the night, that they should then (it being nine o'clock) take some supper, and after that lie down partially dressed, and get all the sleep they could. As they were about to leave the room his habitual reserve nearly left him, but the momentary impulse to shake hands with each of them, a thing he had never done before, was checked, and he merely added, "May God reward you."

Poor Mrs. Robert, to whom her husband mentioned what had taken place, so far forgot her grief as to give instructions for a more ample supper than usual to be served in the servants' hall, where the

clerks, at a separate table, took all their meals except dinner, which they always had below the däis in the dining-room, entering by a door communicating with the offices, and to this she added two bottles of old malt wine, for which, as well as for its home-brewed ale, the house in the Close was famous. The lights in the upper rooms and in the hall were left burning, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert sat with their bedroom window open, listening to every footstep in the Close in hopes that it might be a messenger from the police office with news of their lost child. As for poor Mr. Henry he had put himself away in his bed-room in a state of utter despair. He openly accused himself before Joseph of being the most hardened criminal the light ever shone upon, He formed desperate resolutions to send for the yellow carriage from the coach-builder's, late as it was, and, hiring a pair of horses,

scour the country for miles round. He would suddenly divest himself of his dressing-gown, and, overlooking altogether the snuff-coloured coat, array himself in his capacious overcoat, and forgetting his nightcap, which he had put on with the intention of getting into bed, and that he was only in his slippers, declare himself ready to proceed there and then in the search.

Joseph had never seen his master so excited before, and creeping below expressed his fears to Mrs. Robert that he would lose his head. Mrs. Robert thought it best to leave his overwrought feelings to work themselves out, and as he refused all solid food, she got him to consent to have a basin of sago gruel sent to his room, to which she added a good allowance of port wine, and slipping in also, unknown to Joseph, a strong sedative, the old gentleman partook of it with considerable relish, and feeling very drowsy immediately after-

wards, Joseph undressed him, and assisted him into bed, when he fell into a sound sleep.

The household at the Close did not retire to rest until long after midnight. Mr. and Mrs. Robert had spent the greater part of the evening in seclusion, helping each other to bear the sad affliction, and pouring out their hearts to God in humble supplication that it would please him at his own good time to restore to them their beloved child. They had great hopes that the intelligence and perseverance of the constables, stimulated by the handsome reward offered, would enable them to find a clue to where he was.

CHAPTER V.

A HIDING PLACE.

THE town of Drawbridge was about eight miles from Lumechester, in a northerly direction. Its only trade was cotton spinning; its population consisted of factory hands, overlookers, and the men usually self-made, and in many cases originally hands or overlookers in factories, who formed the aristocracy of the place and owners of the mills. These millowners were men of uncouth manners and uncultivated tastes; money was their mammon, and to gain this they were by no means particular as to the means. They prided themselves on speaking the Lancashire

dialect, and regarded any who spoke the English of good society as "finikin fellows." They mixed on familiar terms with their workmen, and were not at all unwilling to settle any dispute by an appeal to the fist. They were most of them men of exceptionally large wealth; they built big houses, filled them with fine furniture, and frequently with fine pictures, and yet lived in their kitchens. Their carriages, which came out on state occasions only, were of the most expensive build, and their horses as good as money could buy. They clothed their wives and daughters in the most expensive silks which the looms of Macclesfield could furnish, silks which would stand up self-supporting. When they did give dinners, the tables groaned under huge rounds of beef and saddles of mutton; no money was too much to pay for their wines; the guests could not stay too long. It was not at all un-

usual for many of the guests to be at the breakfast table the following morning, and it had even occurred that a veteran toper had been found there on the third day.

When trade was brisk the looms at Drawbridge worked day and night, as indeed was the practice of the neighbourhood generally, Lumechester included. The overworked population, though they made large wages, were but little better off, owing to their improvident habits, than if they had worked the number of hours only which the human frame could bear without injury. This overworking was especially hard upon children, who were not then protected by the law. A large family was a mine of wealth to the factory operative, who, if he did not want his children to assist at his own looms, hired them out to those who did, and his aggregate earnings would amount to a large sum. Females, as well as males, were a source of income.

In a cottage, one of a long low range of dwellings which a millowner had put up as residences for his workpeople, lived Richard Basford, a man about 40 years of age. He was a man of tall and powerful frame, with a large forehead and intellectual face, and a mouth and jaw indicative of great resolution. His hair was iron grey, as if cares and anxieties had already begun to impress their stamp upon him. His wife, about the same age, was a masculine-looking woman, and nearly as tall as himself.

They were then childless, a boy who had reached the age of five sickened and died, and the neighbours said that Dick Basford and his wife had never been the same since. He was a sober steady man, and had early in life joined the Primitive Methodists, and soon became known for his rough and fervid eloquence, when, in the little low building in which the congre-

gation met, he at times conducted the service. He worked in the mill of one of the large manufacturers; but a distant relative having died shortly after the death of his little boy, leaving him a small competence, and seeing no prospect of other children, he gave up work. He was a great admirer of the writings of Mr. Cobbett; he admired his manliness, his terse and vigorous language, and his untiring advocacy of the rights of the working man.

Being independent of the smiles and frowns of the millowners, he expressed his opinions freely both in public and in private, and, moreover, distributed in the town and neighbourhood tracts, drawing the attention of the working-men to their down-trodden condition and want of political privileges, so that in time he began to be looked upon as a troublesome fellow. He was not long in finding this out, and

repaid the dislike of the manufacturers on every occasion that he could. So long as work was plentiful and wages high Richard Basford's influence was small, but when discontent became rife he was looked upon by the operatives as their friend and guide.

In 1807 the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended in consequence of riots in many parts of England, and Richard Basford was arrested in his own house and carried off a prisoner to the gaol at Lumechester, and stood for trial at the Assizes for using seditious language. His wife obtained permission to visit him in his cell, and the attention of his gaoler being called off by a disturbance among the prisoners, of whom there was a large number, and omitting to lock the cell door, Basford instantly, at his wife's suggestion, changed clothes with her, and the gaoler on his return meeting, as he thought, Basford's wife in the passage, locked the cell door,

and did not discover until the following morning that the occupant of the cell was the wife and not Basford himself. The latter took refuge amongst the hills on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, until the vengeance of the authorities had been appeased by the trial and execution of several of the offenders, when Basford returned to his house at Drawbridge.

His clever escape had raised him and his wife to the height of popularity amongst the workpeople of the town, and smarting under the treatment he had received, he became a ready instrument in the hands of the demagogues, who had no difficulty in enlisting him as the leader of the contingent to march to Lumechester from Drawbridge on the 16th August.

The day was hot, and Basford, at the head of his men, feeling the effect of the heat took off his coat and threw it over his shoulder, and on mounting the platform

at Lumechester preferred being without it, as indeed were many others of the intended speakers.

On the Yeomanry cutting their way through the mob to the platform, killing four and wounding over forty, Basford jumped from the waggon and joined his wife, who had marched with him, and stood close to the platform. In the fall he lost his coat; the two, helping to support each other in the frightful rush which took place, found themselves in that part of the mob which surged up Mornington-street to the point where Mr. Henry and Lawrie stood, when, seeing an "aristocrat" with an elegantly dressed boy in his arms, he snatched away the latter under a sudden impression that he might make him useful, and bidding his wife take off her shawl, snatched a paper cap from the head of a little factory boy, and taking off Lawrie's nice straw hat, put on the cap, and wrapped the shawl

over the boy so as to conceal his long curls, and giving him to his wife (all done in an instant) they mingled in the mass rushing down the High-street. On reaching the bottom of that street, where four openings presented themselves, Basford and his wife took the one forming a continuation of High-street, and then turning to the right into a street called Wellgate, entered a narrow passage leading into a court, into one of the houses of which they went, fastening the door after them.

The street into which the passage opened was one of the old streets in the vicinity of the Cathedral which we have described, and the house which Basford and his wife went into was a large old-fashioned mansion after the style of those in the Close, but it bore a dilapidated look, many of the window panes were broken and the space filled up with brown paper. The rooms were let off in separate holdings to factory hands.

The room in which Basford and his wife had taken refuge was a large apartment, which had apparently been used as a dining room in former days. The tenant was a Drawbridge man, had been in the mob, and being thrown in contact with many Drawbridge people, had asked them before the attack by the Yeomanry to come to his room after the meeting. He had fallen in with Basford's views at Drawbridge, and had been drawn into the circle of discontent so much that he knew most of the leaders, and they considered him a safe man, and several of them had, before Basford and his wife came in, sought shelter in the apartment, so that there were not less than some twenty persons in the room. There was general delight expressed at seeing them, and strong grasps by strong men of strong hands followed.

Those who knew Mrs. Basford, and that she had no family, wondered what she had

under her shawl, and wondered still more when she uncovered little Lawrie and made him stand up on the table.

His beautiful face, pale with weeping, his long curls, his velvet coat and vest, and his look of high birth took them quite by surprise, and they crowded round the trembling little boy expressing their admiration. In a few words Basford told them how he had obtained possession of him; this he did with many bitter expressions about "greedy landowners," and "bloated capitalists," and wound up by saying that he (Lawrie) should be a pledge for the safety of every man and woman present.

Poor little Lawrie looked from face to face to catch one kindly look and failed to do so, for the words of Basford had struck into their hearts, and they looked like priests awaiting the sacrifice, and throwing himself on Mrs. Basford's neck he promised her such a many nice apples, "oh, so many,"

extending his little hands to indicate the extent of his generosity, if she would take him home to his dear mamma. That appeal went straight to Mrs. Basford's heart; she thought of her little boy just the age of Lawrie. What would have been her feelings had he been taken from her.

"Give me the child," shouted a factory hand, a man about thirty, "my missus has no children and he'll just do for my loom. I'll cut off the long curls, and no one will know him again, and his velvet will make a nice trimming for my missus's dress," and with that he reached over his dirty hands to seize the shrinking boy.

"Hold off, I tell thee," said Mrs. Basford. "The boy is not for such as thee, and if thou touch him I'll squeeze thy neck for thee."

Mrs. Basford wrapped up her little charge again in the shawl, and, leaving her husband and all the others, took him to a room at

the top of the house which was unoccupied, and, begging some bread and milk, fed the little fellow, and then taking him in her strong arms rocked him to sleep. Childhood's grief is no match for the god Somnus.

Basford stayed below; the assemblage there could not go to their homes that night, and they resolved to make merry. Silver was plentifully showered on the table, and two of their number were deputed to fetch some gallons of ale. Whatever may have been the vices of the day, frequenting the ginshop was not one. Ale, that honoured British wine, was the draught of the British workmen. The taverns brewed their own ale, and adulteration was almost unknown. The deputies went to the Red Dragon, and returned with the foaming and sparkling fluid—clear as crystal and honest as steel. The tankard went merrily round; all drank save Richard Basford,

who passed it, but in no pharasaical spirit, simply saying that he liked it, but it did not suit him. Then there was a call for a song. It was not long before this was answered, for in Lancashire at that time part singing was a general accomplishment. In any road side inn an offer of glasses round for a song was pretty sure to be responded to in correct time and tune. In the mills singing was encouraged, and more than one celebrated cantatrice has been taken from the loom to distinguish herself in public. On this occasion a young mill hand with a fine soprano voice sang the first verse of the following song, a contralto the second, and a tenor the third, a fine bass lifted up the chorus:—

Hurrah for the shuttle and loom,
For the glare of the merry gas light,
We ne'er feel the evil of gloom.
Our day is the middle of night.

Chorus—We spin out our life
Free from envy and strife;
Dull care no pleasure can blight.

Hurrah for the dwelling so warm;
The wind goes whistling past,
Whilst others crouch under the storm
We laugh at the pitiless blast.
Chorus—We sneer at the wind
Which others may blind,
When dark clouds the sky overcast.

Hurrah for the beautiful thread,
As it rushes so white through the hand,
Spin it thin and 'twill easily spread
O'er many a nobleman's land.
Chorus—The coils that we wind,
In their grasp shall bind
Each tyrant with strongest band.

Hurrah for the murmuring sound
Of the Giant we none of us fear;
Not even the waterfall's bound
So soothingly sweet to the ear.
Chorus—Then hurrah for the life
Without envy or strife;
And hurrah for its merry cheer.

The night was now well advanced, and each one picking out, as the sailors say, a soft plank, nestled down on the hard boards for the night, with the single exception of Richard Basford.

He felt an inward consciousness of danger near, and having lived for so many years a life of turmoil and suspicion, he cared not for death; but he determined, if necessary, to sell his life dearly. Seated on a form which was placed against the wall, he slept a kind of dog sleep until morning broke.

When Mrs. Basford got into the bed where Lawrie lay in the sweet sleep of childhood, she took him into her arms as she had been wont to take her own boy, and seizing the idea first suggested by the mill hand whom she had rebuffed, she formed the plan of adopting him as her own, taking him to Drawbridge if she could do so without fear of discovery, otherwise seeking some retreat in the mountain ranges of

Lancashire or Yorkshire. In maturing her plans she fell asleep.

About four o'clock in the morning, when the sun was just topping the horizon, she felt a little hand creeping over her cheek, and then saw an astonished little face gazing at her.

"It isn't nurse," exclaimed little Lawrie, who then burst into a fit of crying.

"Do take me to mamma," he sobbed, putting his little arms round her neck; "oh, she'll give you such a many beautiful apples."

CHAPTER VI.

A DETECTIVE.

Mr. Robert and his wife stayed up until the morning broke; they had listened for the hoped-for messenger until their hearts sank within them, and Mrs. Robert, closing the bedroom window with a deep drawn sigh, entreated her husband to seek some sleep.

"I am not tired, dearest," said she, "but you must be, and you know you have your business to attend to, and that cannot be neglected; one loss should not be allowed to create another," and after much persuasion he lay down, she, half dressed, lying by his side, ready to start up at a moment's notice.

The voice of old Tombs sounded gratingly on her ear. She never thought his tones so discordant before; but at last, overcome by fatigue and anxiety she fell asleep. She dreamed that little Lawrie, in his velvet coat and vest and white drawers, was sitting on her knee, and telling all he knew about Jonah in the whale's belly, and she awoke to the bitter reality and never closed her eyes again; for the sun was shining brightly, and the sparrows in the Close were chirping, and the carts of Lumechester were beginning their rumble, and another day's life was beginning. She rose, leaving her husband asleep, and dressed, and her careful toilet was scarcely completed when she heard a knock at the hall door, and, hoping that some tidings of Lawrie had at last arrived, bounded down stairs and opened it herself, when who should present himself but old Tombs.

On the previous night, old Tombs had, as

usual, entered upon his duties, duly arrayed in a heavy overcoat, his head protected by the woollen night cap and broad-brimmed hat, and with his dog and lantern. His beat extended beyond the Close, and comprised the street called Wellgate, into which the passage to the house where Basford and his wife had taken refuge opened, and about three o'clock in the morning he met a "late bird," who accosted him:—

"Hilloh! you lazy old scamp—what's the clock?"

Now, Tombs prided himself on his official position—and it was impossible that he could permit such a very improper observation to pass without a retort. So he stopped and replied:—

"You'd better step across to this here side of the street and I'll shew you the clock at our police office." (Tombs's valour was tempered with discretion.) Whilst he stopped his dog picked up

something with his mouth, which Tombs seeing, said,—

"Well, Tray, what hast thou got—a dead rat, hey?"

Reaching down he took it out of the dog's mouth, and, holding it to his lantern, said:—"Why, if it be-ant a glove, and a very little un too—and it's silk"—and examining it further, he saw "Lawrie" worked in red silk at the wrist.

Now old Tombs had heard of the loss of little Lawrie, who was quite a friend of his, and, stupid as the old man usually was, he was quick enough on this occasion, for he at once made up his mind that it was little Lawrie's glove—and taking out of his pocket a piece of chalk with which he kept his score at the back of the door of the Red Dragon, he made a cross on the wall opposite the place where he picked up the glove.

When Mrs. Robert opened the door

in answer to Tombs's knock she was still smarting under the infliction caused by Tombs's hoarse voice, and did not receive him very graciously, though she was habitually kind to the old man, and often, especially in winter, gave him a half-crown and a good supper.

"What is it, Tombs?" she said, with as much asperity as her gentle nature permitted; "you should be off your beat and in bed by this time."

"Why, Marm," said Tombs, touching his hat, "I thought I would-na go off me beat till I'd brought here this little glove."

"Glove!" said Mrs. Robert, "why, it is dear little Lawrie's," and her face went alternately bright red and deadly pale. "Come in, Tombs," said she, which he did, leaving his dog outside.

Then Tombs had to tell when and where he found the glove, and taking out his chalk he made on the bright

dining-room table a fac simile of the mark he had left on the wall in the Wellgate.

Mrs. Robert rang the bell, and ordered the servant to bring a cup of hot coffee, to which, with her own hands, she added a wineglassful of the liquid Tombs dearly loved, old Jamaica rum; and when he had finished, she told Tombs to go at once to the police office and inquire for the Chief-Constable, and if he was there give the glove to him, and tell how, when, and where he found it, and if he was not there, to hand it over to the constable on duty and take his receipt for it, the form of which she drew up. It was then only six o'clock, and her joy was so great at having only seen Lawrie's little glove that she was almost tempted to awaken her husband, but on second thoughts she determined to let him sleep on.

Old Tombs, mightily refreshed with the

coffee and rum, and followed by his dog, made haste to deposit his treasure-trove at the police office. On his arrival the Chief was not there, but the Deputy Chief-Constable was.

"Well, old Tombs," said the latter, "what's up, that you are not gone to bed."

"This is what's up," said Tombs, producing the little glove. "It's Master Lawrie de Noel's," and proceeded to state the history of the finding, and the exact spot where it was picked up.

Whew!—whistled the Deputy, and calling out "Green! here's nuts to crack," was answered by the same constable as appeared when Mr. Robert's clerk gave the letter to the Chief-Constable the previous evening.

"Now, Tombs," said the Deputy, "you write me a report of this at once."

So the former sat down, and with many twists of his mouth, and divers impreca-

tions on the pen, which before many seconds had elapsed had covered his fingers and the writing paper with ink, wrote as follows:—

"I, Zachariah Tombs," (but "Tombs," said the old man, putting down his pen and gazing at the ceiling, "ain't my name; it's 'Rogers;' they call me Tombs because my box is next the churchyard rails; but I'm paid as 'Tombs,' and so it don't signify," and thereupon he took up his pen again and proceeded) "do by this writin, under my hand, say that at nine o'clock or summat loike it, past meridium on the 16th day of August, in this year of our Lord, 1819, I entered upon my dooties of sworne-in constable and night watch, to wich office I was appinted at a vestry meeting duly conveneyed on the 9th day of February, 1801, and attended by my dowg Tray and the Red Dragon—wich is conveniant to call at—all quiet. My dowg Tray

is a faithful creeter, and won't bite nobody unless I tell him, and stopped on hearing a blackguard tell me I was lasy, which I denye and can prove it. I thowt he'd got a dead rot, which he had'nt, becos it were a gluv, and gettin out my old spektakel case fun Lawrie inside. So I takes out of me pocket the chalk I hev to keep score at the Red Dragon, and puts a X on the wall opsite where I fun the gluv. So this is all at present from,

"Your humbel Servant,

"ZACH: TOMBS.

("Should be Rogers.")

Then handing the production to the Deputy, who smiled but said nothing, Tombs betook himself to his home and bed.

Immediately after Green had been addressed by his superior he told a brother officer that he was going to the Red Dragon, that he was not to be sent for

unless wanted by the Chief-Constable, and that the "factory boy," a lad in the pay of the police, and suiting that character, was to loiter about the end of a certain passage in Wellgate, near the Red Dragon, and be ready on call.

Green then made his way towards the Wellgate, but when he had got within about fifty yards of the Red Dragon, he turned into a passage to the right, and after many turns reached the back door of the Inn, at which he knocked, and was instantly admitted, as if well known.

"Where's the landlord," he said, in a tone of authority. "If he is'nt up yet, tell him not to hurry, I can wait; but I'll go into the front bed-room, if unoccupied" (which was the case), "and he can come to me when he is ready. Let me have breakfast up there—coffee and broiled ham."

He then arranged the window curtain

that he might, unseen from the street, have a good view from the bow window, and drawing an arm-chair within the recess, fixed his eyes upon the passage leading into the court where Basford and his wife had taken refuge.

An hour had scarcely elapsed from Green leaving the police office, when one of the workmen sent by the authorities to remove the waggon and platform from the scene of the meeting the day before, brought to the office a coat, which had been found close to one of the wheels, and he was at once taken to the Chief-Constable, who had then arrived on duty. The experienced officer held it up by the collar, and said, in an undertone, "Too good for a common workman," and then searched the pockets, from one of which he drew a many-colored cotton pocket-handkerchief, which he proceeded to examine very carefully. In one corner in black cotton he found the

initials "R. B." He coolly folded it up, replaced it in the pocket, and handed the coat to a constable, and then muttered to himself, "I thought so." The coat, Mr. Henry's description of the man in the shirt sleeves, the words he used in snatching the child from Mr. Henry's arms, and the found glove, left no doubt on the Chief-Constable's mind that the man who had possession of little Lawrie was Richard Basford, whom the officer well knew from his having been a prisoner in the Gaol, and that in all probability he was then hiding in some house near where the glove was found.

He then quietly considered whether he should at once search the houses in that vicinity (and his experience at once led him to suspect the house in which Basford then was), or whether he should delay that step in the hope of arresting not only Basford but also the other ringleaders of

the rioters. He argued that a meeting of the leaders would be held that day somewhere in Lumechester, before the representatives from London, Birmingham, Nottingham, and other large towns returned home; and where so likely a place as Wellgate, where there was but little traffic of any kind, and where Basford, one of their most able men, and one who by the loss of his coat was unable to leave the house, was staying. He sent a note to Green: "Basford is in Wellgate Court," that was its name; "send factory boy if anything stirring—shall be ready to assist—look out for the child and follow if he is brought out."

At the entrance to the court there was a simple looking factory boy (a real factory boy) of about sixteen, whom Green's experienced eye saw at once was a "look-out." Shod in heavy clogs, such as were then universally worn by

factory hands, he appeared to spend his time in gazing up and down the street, now and then amusing himself with a clog dance. Those who remember Lancashire of that day will recollect how expert the hands were at the clog dance. It was as clever, when well done, as the drums of the Guards, but without the fifes. But Green noticed a peculiar turn of the hand whenever anyone passed into the court, although in each case the factory boy seemed intent only on a new variation of his favourite dance.

A number of earnest-looking men, apparently of the upper working class, went into the passage during the day, first casting furtive glances up and down the street, and did not return.

When Green was at his breakfast, the landlord came into his room.

"Anything wrong, Mr. Green," said he.

"Rather," said Green, who knew that he

could deal frankly with the landlord. "I expect to cage a dozen of those fellows who caused the row yesterday. Tell me," he continued, "have the people from Wellgate Court sent here for anything, yesterday or to-day?"

"Two men," said the landlord, "who looked like Drawbridge or Boldenham men, came here yesterday evening and took and paid for four gallons of ale, and left five shillings on the pewters, which they said they would bring back to-day, but they haven't; but they looked honest chaps and I daresay will come in before night. I don't know that they came from the court, but I fancied they did."

"When they come," said Green, "let me know, and keep them in conversation."

About four o'clock in the afternoon the two men brought the pewters to the Red

Dragon, and said they were going home, and ordered a pint of ale each.

The landlord sent a message up stairs to Green, and kept the men in conversation.

When they had finished their ale and received the difference in the deposit, Green, who had been eying the men from behind a door, stepped forward, and saying, "I want to speak to you," got at the same time between them and the entrance.

"What dost want we us," said one of them.

Green did not stop to argue the point, but pushing one against the other, he had them in the inner passage in a second, and saying, "I am a constable," ordered them upstairs into the bed-room which he had occupied all day, and entering with them locked the door.

"Now, lads," he said, "I don't want you, but I want what you know, and, if

you will be fair and square with me, you can go home quietly to-night. You have come out of Wellgate Court, haven't you?"

Now, if there be one thing which a Lancashire workman abhors more than another, it is turning on a fellow-workman, so the two stood without replying.

"Come, no nonsense," said Green, and he took out two sets of handcuffs; "you either speak openly or I'll have these on you in no time. Tell me, is Richard Basford in Wellgate Court?"

"Yes," they both said, feeling that concealment would only harm themselves and not save Basford.

"Has he a gentleman's son, a little boy five years old, with him?"

"Yes," was the answer.

"Now, tell me," said Green, "the names of the others," which they did, and he wrote them down.

"Now, my lads," said he, "I'll take

your word that you won't attempt to escape; that you won't speak to anybody about this; and if you will do this you may go downstairs, and sit in the back parlour, and smoke your pipe and drink your glass of ale, and there's a shilling for it, until I let you off."

They gave their word, and Green knew that he could rely upon it as much as if given by the finest gentleman in England.

CHAPTER VII.

A QUACK DOCTOR.

THE basin of sago gruel had given Mr. Henry an excellent night's rest—for he was asleep by ten o'clock, and only awoke on Tombs knocking at the door, and the first effort was to rub his eyes with his left hand; but on trying to raise his arm he found it powerless, and the effort caused a pain to shoot from his shoulder to the tips of his fingers. His back, too, felt so stiff and sore that he was unable to lift himself up in bed, and his legs felt bruised and swollen. He rang the bell, and Joseph, although his toilet was incomplete, at once made his appearance.

"Joseph," said Mr. Henry, "I can't move.

I'm bad all over; just look at this shoulder," and on turning down his nightshirt Joseph exclaimed,

"Good gracious me! Why, Master, your arm is as black as my hat."

And no wonder, for the old gentleman had fallen with great violence into the entrance of the Crown and Cushion, and, in trying to break his fall, had come down with much force on the elbow of the left arm, and had evidently injured himself very much. But his only thought was not to add to the troubles of the household.

"Now, Joseph," he said "mind you don't say a word about this to anyone. Say that I am a little stiff with yesterday's walk, and that I shall be all right by the middle of the day. I shall be up to dinner. Give my duty to Mrs. Robert, and tell her so—and I dare say, Joseph, that you can manage, without giving much trouble, to bring me up my breakfast on a tray."

Mrs. Robert met Joseph coming down stairs, and on the latter reporting to her Mr. Henry's state she expressed the greatest sorrow, and at once gave directions that Mr. Henry's breakfast should be prepared, and begged Joseph to assure him that it was no trouble whatever, and that if he did not feel better by dinner time he could have that meal also sent to his room without the least inconvenience.

Mr. Robert came down at the usual hour for family prayers. He looked pale, but the stern character of his face was unchanged. The clerks and domestics were summoned into the dining-room. During the reading of a portion of the Bible, which always preceded the prayers—the reading being taken by the children in turns—the face of Mr. Robert maintained its usual immobility, and when he said, "Let us pray," there was nothing to indicate that his spirit was broken. He said the words

in his usually clear, sonorous tones, and kneeling down, prayed, in a cosmopolitan spirit, for the welfare of all men, and for the spread of the gospel of Christ throughout all lands. Then thanking the Almighty for the blessings conferred on him and his family, he proceeded thus—

"Most gracious Father, who didst grant thy merciful kindness to thy servant David when Absalom his son was slain, do thou give, I entreat thee, to me and my dear partner in life, strength to bear the affliction thou hast in thy wise Providence visited us with, and should it be thy good pleasure that we and the dear ones around us whom thou hast given us should for ever be severed from—"

No more word could the strong man utter.

The clerks and domestics rose from their knees and silently glided from the room. His wife rose, and placing her hands on

his shoulder, while their children sobbed around, said,—

"Dearest partner of my life, mourn not as those without hope. God will protect our child. I dreamt last night that he sat upon my knee, and certain I am that he will be restored to our arms."

The family sat down to breakfast. Mrs. Robert's words had filled each heart with a prescience that little Lawrie would soon take his accustomed seat there, and a subdued cheerfulness prevailed.

Before Mr. Robert left for his place of business, a note arrived from the Chief-Constable in these words: "We have a clue. I hope before night to restore your son to you. I shall call upon you at six precisely; be sure to be in the way, your assistants also."

"Did I not tell you, dearest," said Mrs. Robert, "that all would be well? Go forth now to your struggles with the world, and

let no anxious thought stand between you and your duty."

Immediately after her husband's departure Mrs. Robert sent Joseph to Mr. Henry to say that she would be glad to see him in his room, if he would permit her to do so, for she greatly feared that his injuries were more severe than he allowed Joseph to admit.

This message greatly pleased Mr. Henry, but as he had never had such an honour paid to him before, he was greatly perturbed as to how he should receive his cousin's wife. The thought suddenly struck him that a night-cap was not a becoming head-dress in which to receive a lady visitor, and that, devoid of the concealment afforded by that appendage, his unpowdered hair would offer a strong contrast to the same thing when powdered, and that altogether he might in bed present a totally different aspect to his appearance when

en grande tenue. "But what," after a moment's reflection, he said to Joseph, "does it matter? Mrs. Robert is not a silly young woman, and I don't care if she does see me in my night-cap. So, Joseph, tell her that I feel honoured by her kindness, and shall be most happy to see her at once."

Mrs. Robert was quite shocked to find him so injured; his arm especially presented a terrible sight.

"Dear cousin," said she, "you really must have a doctor immediately."

"A doctor! my dear Madam, quite impossible!—quite impossible!"

"But why? They do good; indeed you can't do without one when you are very ill. I really must send for one."

"Dear Madam, pray don't. I can't see him. Forgive me for saying you must not. I have a horror of a doctor, and would rather see a—mad dog."

Mrs. Robert could not help laughing. "But, you see," said she, "everybody else has a doctor, and why should not you?"

"Shams!—Impostors!—all of them—mischief makers, sly—sly, sneaking scoundrels. Forgive me, my dear Madam, but I can't help it. Burglar a respectable character comparatively. If ever I am ill I would not mind a veterinary surgeon, but a doctor—never!"

What could be the cause of Mr. Henry's dislike? For are not doctors admitted into the confidence of all the families in the kingdom—are they not especially the favourites of the wives, and are they not the depositaries of the faults and failings of the husbands, as disclosed by the partners of their bosoms, and don't they listen with gusto to the little stories of tiffs and estrangements between those who have promised to love, honour, and cherish each other until death them do part; and

has a doctor never been known (oh, dear, no; never!) to wean a wife's affections from her husband—and has no doctor ever been told by a high judicial authority that he has acted the sneak and pandered to a wife's weakness to get hold of her money? Oh, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon! for is it not a vile and infamous aspersion upon a body of honourable men?

But wrong and wicked as it may be even to think of such things, nevertheless Mr. Henry did think of such things; and nobody could convince him to the contrary that the elderly maiden aunt aforesaid—the one with whom he travelled to London in the year 1740—had been so bamboozled by the daily visits and soft speeches of her medical man (charged at the remarkably low rate of 3s. 6d. per visit, speech included), that a goodly sum of £5,000 had changed hands in a manner not the most agreeable to Mr. Henry's feelings.

After a pause, Mr. Henry said, "I'll go and see the Bloomfield-road Doctor."

"What," said Mrs. Robert, "the man who cures horses, and dogs, and cattle, and would do so in preference to human beings?"

"The very same, my dear Madam. I have never seen him; but lots of people at Whicham have been to him, and he has cured them all, when your bowing, cringing medical men could do nothing for them."

But how was Mr. Henry in his bruised and battered state to get to Bloomfield-road?

Mrs. Robert suddenly bethought herself of Mrs. Smyley's sedan chair, in which she went about in her ministrations in her husband's district. So writing a hurried note to Mrs. Smyley, stating the urgency of the case, and requesting that her chairmen might be allowed to

bring the chair and take Mr. Henry to Bloomfield-road and back, she received a kind note from Mrs. Smyley, graciously acceding to her request, and expressing a hope that the affliction would work to the spiritual welfare of Mr. Henry (whom she had been in the habit of regarding as a lost sheep from the fold of Christ), and that he would find a copy of Dr. Smyley's hymns and Dr. Smyley's sermons (7s. 6d. each in cloth, 10s. in calf) in the pockets of the chair, and she hoped that a careful perusal and inward digestion of them would lead to his eternal good.

To this was added a postscript that either of the chairmen would take charge of the money, and that having heard of little Lawrie's disappearance, which she considered must have been the work of the Jesuits, she would call in a day or two.

The chairmen brought the note and

the sedan chair together, and protruding prominently from the pocket were the aforesaid publications, which, however, Mrs. Robert had the womanly tact to remove, as she knew that Mr. Henry looked upon Dr. Smyley as a "Methodist," and had been heard to express his contempt for both Dr. Smyley's Hymns and Dr. Smyley's Sermons.

After considerable exertion Mr. Henry was ready to avail himself of the sedan chair, but he could not put his left arm into the sleeve of his coat, and was obliged to carry it in a sling.

The chairmen had a great weight to carry—very different to Mrs. Smyley's—and the distance, nearly two miles, tried them, but the bonhomie of Mr. Henry, and a tankard of ale which he insisted on their taking at a tavern on the road, quite reconciled them to the weight, and they reached the Bloomfield-road doctor's at

about three o'clock. They found the doctor examining a valuable hunter sent to him to advise about, and for which he had left about fifty patients, some of them in great suffering, and he seemed in no hurry to go back to them.

As the sedan chair entered the large yard forming the approach to the doctor's establishment, and in which stood every imaginable kind of vehicle, from the cart to the well appointed carriage, the doctor looked at it, and addressing Joseph said—

"What hast thou got here, man?"

Joseph replied, "It's Mr. Henry de Noel, sir, a Cheshire gentleman, hurt by the mob yesterday."

The doctor stepped to the chair, and seeing the powdered head and superior style of Mr. Henry's dress (a striking contrast to his own), took off his hat with his left hand, and taking Mr. Henry's right

with a cordial grasp, asked, in a very kind, soft manner, very different to his first enquiry, what was the matter.

"Oh, come," said the doctor, "we'll soon cure thee. Take my arm," and with that he led Mr. Henry through a large outbuilding crowded with patients, chiefly of the labouring class, into his house, and there, seating him on a couch, proceeded to examine his arm.

"Here, Dick and Tom; come here, lads," shouted the doctor; whereupon two stalwart assistants seized Mr. Henry, and putting him as it were into a vice, the doctor took the left arm and throwing it up suddenly and with great force, inflicting the most frightful pain, which, however, Mr. Henry bore with admirable fortitude, he said—

"Thou hast broken what those learned doctors call the 'clavicle;' that is, thou hast splintered the cup which holds the arm

in its place; but thou wilt be all right with care."

The doctor then took a large roll of adhesive plaster, and, commencing on the top of the shoulder, carried it under the elbow and some distance below, the arm being all the time held so that the fingers rested on the right shoulder and the arm firmly thrust into the cup of the shoulder, then fixing the sling so as to give additional support, he said,—

"Now, thoul't do; but thou must apply this red bottle—handing him a large bottle —twice a day just here," pointing to where the bone was broken, and, naming his fee, 7s.6d., shook hands, and in a kindly, respectful manner, said good-bye.

Mr. Henry went back greatly relieved in mind and body.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHILDLESS BLISS.

After a plentiful fit of crying, little Lawrence once more lay down and fell asleep. Mrs. Basford rose early, and looking at the sleeping boy, the tears standing in her eyes the while, she kissed him, and set to work to put things in order. The room was tenanted by an old woman who had seen better days, but she had gone into the country to see her son, and the tenant of the next room, with whom she had left the key, let Mrs. Basford have it for the night. The furniture was scanty, but clean, and in a large cupboard in one corner Mrs. Basford found the requisites

for a fire and simple cooking. The "next room" let her have enough for her own and Lawrie's breakfast, and she soon had the kettle boiling, and the little table, with a clean cloth, covered with the preparations for the morning meal. She again went to the bed and kissed Lawrie, on which he awoke, and staring with wide open eyes at her face cried out—

"It isn't nurse. Mamma, dear mamma, do come to Lawrie."

Mrs. Basford, who had suddenly been transformed from a stern masculine woman into a tender-hearted mother, did her best to soothe him, and so successfully, that after he was dressed he stood at the open window throwing crumbs of bread to the sparrows, and laughing at the contentions of that quarrelsome little breed over the food.

The room was in the attics, which the architect had planted like an excrescence

on the main roof, and round it there was a space protected by a stout railing on the outer side, wide enough for anyone to walk about and look over the town and surrounding country, and on this place opened the window of the room in which Lawrie was.

It was a lovely autumn morning. A slight breeze in the night had carried off the smoke collected over the town on the previous day, and as the factory chimneys had not yet had time to cast their leaden shade the sky was clear. The green fields ran up to the town on the opposite side of the river, and stretched far away until bounded by a range of high ground, forming with the windings of the river quite a pretty landscape. From the roof to the river, which ran at the foot of the rock on which the house stood, there was a perpendicular fall of about seventy feet, and Mrs. Basford drew little Lawrie

back with a shudder when the little fellow wanted to look over the rails.

Having cleared away the breakfast things, Mrs. Basford sat down, and taking knitting materials from her pocket began to knit. As soon as she was seated, Lawrie went to her, and kneeling down put his little hand to his face, and bending his head forward, repeated the Lord's Prayer, and then said, "God bless dear Papa and Mamma, and all my little brothers and sisters, and make me a good boy, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

When he rose Mrs. Basford took him on her knee, clasped him to her bosom, and cried and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Immediately afterwards Basford's strong voice was heard on the landing.—"Mary, where art thou?"

Little Lawrie trembling, ran to hide himself in the cupboard, and Mrs. Basford replied,

"Here, Richard, but thou canst not enter; thou wilt frighten the boy. I will come to thee in the next room."

Telling Lawrie not to be afraid, and that she would be back in a minute, she joined her husband in the next room, the occupant and his wife having gone to their work at the factory. Basford, who was very much attached to his wife, said—

"Why, Mary, thou hast been crying; what's the matter. It's a long long time since I saw thee cry—never since little George"—

Here Basford stopped, and a convulsive movement of the muscles of his face shewed that an inward throe had passed through his powerful frame.

He then said, in an unusually kind and softened manner, "Mary, I can't stay with thee—we are going to have a committee meeting to-day, and that and getting ready for it will take all my time; so make thy-

self as happy as thou can. To-night after dark we will go back to Drawbridge—but I shall have to get the loan of a coat from somebody. Don't let the child out of the room, and if spring-heeled Jack (that was the name by which the man who wanted to snatch away the boy was known) should come and worry you about having him, tell him to go about his business."

That day was such a change for Mrs. Basford. Ever since she had lost her own boy she had been the constant companion of her husband in all his wanderings, whether it was to preach in the low dingy room to a gathering of Primitive Methodists or to speak in bold unsparing terms to a meeting of workmen about "bloated capitalists" and "greedy landlords," or to distribute political tracts from door to door, or to sit at the bed-side of some sick workman and administer rough consolation, and leave (as he often did) a gift from his own

small income. Whatever the hour, however wild the day and rough the road, Mary Basford was by her husband's side, and often cheered him up when the gloom of impending danger settled on his spirits. On this day she seemed to drink in an intoxicating draught of happiness. Little Lawrie had got quite used to her, and he sat in a little chair whilst she went on with her knitting, and told her all his Bible stories, especially the one about Jonah in the whale's belly.

At six o'clock precisely the Chief Constable was at the House in the Close—and was shown into the drawing-room.

"I cannot disguise from you," he said to Mr. Robert, whose wife was present, "that I am going to lay down a plan which is not without danger to those concerned in it. We have to deal with men who walk about with halters round their necks, and who, unless we are so fortu-

nate as to take them quite unprepared, will give us trouble. You will not see any of us until you hear us. You, sir, with your assistants, will guard the entrance to Wellgate Court. Half-a-dozen resolute men can stop three times their number, for two cannot get out at a time, and if your truncheons are what they ought to be (and examining one which Mr. Robert shewed him, he said, "That will do"), you ought to knock them over like nine pins as they try to get out. I cannot spare any more men, so you and your assistants must gird up your loins. At seven o'clock precisely, not a minute sooner nor a minute later, be at the mouth of the passage—not inside mind—two on each side and two in front closing up to the side ones, have your truncheons in your hands, and keep your eyes and ears open, for the work will then begin."

The Chief, having arranged with Green

the plan of operations, that officer saw the necessity of getting the "look-out" away from his post. He had never left it all day; all his meals had been brought to him by a little girl, and he ate them sitting on a door-step.

Green sent word to Jem, the police "factory boy," that he wanted to see him at the Red Dragon.

It was almost impossible to make the Lancashire workman of that period understand you unless you spoke to him in his own dialect; so when "Jem" entered the bed-room Green took him to the window and showing him the "look-out," said,—

"Jem, dost thou think thou canst fettle yon lad."

"Yoi," said Jem.

Now in asking the question Green appealed to one of Jem's strongest sympathies. The Lancashire lad of that day was probably the most pugnacious specimen of boy-

hood then existing, for from his cradle he was taught that supremacy in the fistic battle-field was a thing to be aspired to, and that he who could boast of being the hero of a hundred fights was a being to be envied. The mothers of these combative youths were as proud of their sons on their return victorious from the fight as ever was Spartan mother on receiving her son's shield with his dead body upon it. There is a well authenticated story of a conversation between a sturdy dame and her son, who had been to a neighbouring town,—

"Well, Bill; where hast'a been to?"

"Oiv'e been to Boldenham."

"Hast thou foughten?"

"Yoi, and oiv'e broughten a bit on him whoam in my pocket" (producing part of an ear).

Jem had been a factory boy from five years old, and as a mere child was continually trying his strength with those of

his own age and even older. He was then sixteen, and no one would suspect from his appearance that he was the powerful lad he was.

He looked slight, perhaps owing to his badly-fitting jacket; he had not apparently much muscular development, and his face was thin and pale. But when stripped to "the buff," his fully developed chest, shoulders, and arms took people by surprise. He was very "handy" with his fists, and whether it was "a fair stand up" or "an up and down" Jem was quite at home, and he was looked upon as quite a rising star in the P. R.

The police, under whose notice Jem had been prominently brought in consequence of his pugnacity, took a fancy to him, for he was intelligent, civil, and trustworthy, and, having employed him once or twice in a detective capacity, he was put on the list as a supernumerary, but only for special occasions, and by arrangement with his

employer, the sensible Chief-Constable thinking that if he left off work he might lose half his value. He was dressed on this occasion in his usual dress as a factory boy, but, instead of wearing clogs, he had on strong boots with hob nails, laced up to the ankle.

Green then explained to Jem that he wanted the lad opposite off the spot he had occupied all day, at a quarter to seven exactly. That he must keep his eye on the Cathedral clock, which he could see from the court where he was stationed, and that he must then pick a quarrel with the youth, and after exchanging a blow or two pretend to be afraid of his opponent, and run away into the last mentioned court, and when he got him there he must take care he did not come out again, until he, Green, signalled, even if he "throttled" him a bit.

The youth opposite, who had acquired

the name of "Clogs" from his musical performances with those pedal appendages, was about the same height and weight as Jem, and possessed considerable pugilistic proclivities, which he had attempted more than once to put in exercise during the day, after he had exhausted all the tunes he knew and found the time passing heavily. He had a favourable opportunity when he had had his own dinner and the factory boys were returning to work after theirs, and he pushed three or four off the pavement into the street to test their pluck. Probably if he had done this on their way to dinner he would have been accommodated to his heart's content, but the lads, knowing that they would be fined if late at the mill, took no notice and passed on, and the only amusement he found was shying stones at stray dogs, varied by occasional clog music.

CHAPTER IX.

A LEAP FOR LIFE.

After seeing his wife, Richard Basford returned to the room where the fugitives from the sabres of the Yeomanry had met on the previous night. Most of them, feeling that they had been merely spectators, and need not fear arrest, left in good time to return home.

Basford, first throwing open the window to admit the warm morning air, sat down to prepare a statement of the members of the Trades' Society within the Drawbridge district, of which he was Honorary Secretary and Treasurer (disdaining, unlike many patriots, to receive any pay for his services), and of the moneys received and paid

by him in his official capacity, carefully arranging all vouchers, and checking his receipts with the banker's pass book.

It was not until the afternoon that the delegates from the different towns arrived. Some bore clear evidence of their having been present at the monster meeting, from their heads and arms being bound up with linen, and it was past three o'clock before a sufficient number were present to justify their proceeding to business. Richard Basford was unanimously elected chairman, and with that strong religious feeling which pervaded him, he begged them to join in prayer to the Almighty to bless their efforts to raise the labouring class from their slavish condition, and on this being agreed to he with much judgment made a short prayer to the purpose.

The events of the day before were discussed, the conduct of the Yeomanry was commented upon with much bitterness, in-

asmuch as they thought they were acting in accordance with the constitutional privilege of Englishmen to meet in public and discuss their grievances ; and what especially met with reprobation was the fact that if the Riot Act had been read at all, it was read on the outskirts of the meeting, unknown to any but a few, and no notice that the assemblage was deemed illegal had been given by the authorities to the leaders on the platform before the cavalry charged. They determined that a petition should be presented to Parliament complaining of the illegality of the dispersion of the meeting, and of the cruel manner in which it had been effected. All this took a considerable time, for many proposals and counter proposals as to the form of the petition had to be discussed.

Richard Basford then laid before the meeting the accounts which he had prepared in the morning, and suggested that

those District Secretaries and Treasurers who were present should do the same as regarded their own districts, very properly observing that money was the sinews of war, and that at so important a meeting some idea should be formed of their resources; and this was the more necessary inasmuch as rumours had been flying about that patriotism was another name for peculation, and that the sums very freely contributed by the working men had been spent in riotous living. This proposal rather threw a "wet blanket" over the meeting. Some of the Secretaries and Treasurers who had been pointed out as sham patriots were at the table, and there seemed to be a disposition to break up the meeting without coming to any conclusion about the accounts, but Richard Basford, in a clear, calm voice, said—

"Brethren, we have just agreed to a petition to Parliament complaining of the

acts of others; let us who do this shew that we are without blame ourselves. I propose that we take each case in the order in which it is represented at this table. The delegate from Boldenham, who is also Secretary and Treasurer, will no doubt produce his accounts, or if he has not the papers he can from memory probably state the amount of subscriptions."

The delegate from Boldenham was the man who had been pointed out more than any other as a defaulter in his accounts. He was a big, brazen-faced man, and took up the question as being a personal imputation, without the slightest cause, upon himself. There were others at the table whose consciences pricked them, and the room became divided between honest and dishonest delegates. Words of crimination and recrimination were freely used; even fists were raised and violence threatened, until Richard Basford, despairing of calming

the excitement of the meeting, rose from the chair, and went to cool his heated brow at the open window.

Mr. Henry was fully aware of the preparations for the recovery of little Lawrie, and he was convinced in his own mind of the perfect success of the plans, and so enthusiastic was he in the affair that he had taken possession of the truncheon set apart for Joseph, and prepared to substitute himself for that worthy if called upon to serve, his injured shoulder notwithstanding.

Mrs. Robert, however, in playful banter, said she thought that he ought to have a little regard for herself, and stay at home to protect her, seeing that all the rest of the men kind were going to the rescue. Whereupon the old gentleman with a low bow said that he would stay at home and defend her with his life.

As seven o'clock approached his nervous

excitement became very great; he had taken off his snuff-coloured coat and his cravat and shoes with the great silver buckles soon after dinner, and rested himself and his wounded arm in an easy chair in his bedroom, clad in his dressing gown. At six o'clock he suddenly recollected that little Lawrie ought to have some present to greet his return. He therefore sent Joseph into the town to buy the most expensive rocking-horse and largest child's fiddle he could find, and Joseph, fully appreciating the importance of the mission, had left the Close in the full determination that if he hunted the town all over the gift should be worthy of the occasion. The selection of a rocking-horse was the instinctive idea of Mr. Henry, but the choice of a fiddle was dictated by the knowledge, confidently imparted to Joseph by Lawrie's nurse, that a fiddle bought immediately before Mr. Henry's arrival

had had applied to it some strong antidote for the prevention of sound, in order to save Mr. Henry's nerves. So when Mr. Henry wanted Joseph's services to help him to dress in order to receive little Lawrie with due honour, Mr. Henry was left to his own resources, and the consequence was that His Most Gracious Majesty King George III. was turned upside down, the laced cravat was all awry, the waistcoat was inside out, the right shoe was substituted for the left, and *vice versâ*, and the watch, which in his excitement he wound up, was put under his pillow.

Descending into the drawing room at half past six to bid "God speed" to Mr. Robert he stayed only a few minutes, his natural delicacy forbidding him to intrude himself upon those last moments which he knew Mr. and Mrs. Robert would wish to have to themselves. He took Mr. Robert by the hand and said,—

"My dear Sir, I wish my age would allow me to take your place in this desperate adventure. I would gladly do so, for I feel that I am greatly to blame—I—I—wish you fervently every success, and may God bless"—He could not finish the sentence for emotion, and kissing Mrs. Robert on the forehead he retired to his room.

In a few minutes Mr. Robert would have to join his clerks, who were waiting for orders to start. He and his wife sat hand in hand on the couch, she looking up at his face with ineffable tenderness. She said,—

"Robert, it is time to go; may God protect you and my boy. I feel that he will." And after an embrace, Mr. Robert went from the house, followed by the five junior clerks, and exactly as the clock struck seven they were at the mouth of the passage leading into Wellgate Court, arranged as directed by the Chief-Constable.

As the clock struck a quarter to seven Jem emerged from the court where he had been all day, and crossed the road to where Clogs was performing his last tune prior to going off duty. Jem walked in a careless happy-go-lucky way until he came up to Clogs, when he said to the latter—

"Howd thy noise, or I'll make thee," to which Clogs replied defiantly,

"Not thee, or any loike thee—"

Which was immediately followed by a punch in Clogs' ribs, being in fact the very event for which Clogs had been longing all day, and accordingly he returned the compliment with a hearty good will.

Jem, with much judgment, appeared to be afraid to repeat the blow, but did so, after the exchange of a few feints, in a very ineffective way, which was replied to by Clogs by a well-planted blow on the eye. Jem returned it by another ineffectual blow, and retreated towards the passage

to his hiding place. Clogs followed him up, dreaming of an easy victory, and Jem, taking to his heels, rushed after him up the passage into the court, when Jem at once changed his tactics, and getting between Clogs and the exit planted a "one two" in artistic style on Clogs' head, to the astonishment of the latter.

Clogs forgot all about his duty and put his whole soul into the encounter; blow was returned for blow, and Jem was constrained to confess in his own mind that Clogs was not a despicable opponent. Well as Clogs fought he found that Jem fought much better, so he at once turned the fight into an "up and down," which meant kicking, throttling, or anything else, and kicked Jem, as he made a rush, violently on the forehead with his clogs. Jem's blood was now up; he closed with Clogs, threw him heavily, and falling on him put both hands round his throat and asked

him if he would give in. Clogs hesitated a moment, but finding Jem's hands tightening their grasp, he said "Yes," and in another moment Jem helped him to rise, and shaking him by the hand gave him a good lump of a celebrated sweet made in the neighbourhood of Lumechester called "toffy," at the same time telling him that he must stay where he was a short time, and to Clogs' question "Why," he made no reply.

The sun was declining to the west, the sparrows had gone to their unknown resting places for the night, and little Lawrie, having no further amusement, began to yawn. He had been promised during the day that he should be taken to his mamma that night, and Mrs. Basford found it difficult to satisfy him that this would be the case.

About six o'clock, after having had his tea, Mrs. Basford told him that if he would

go to sleep he should be taken to his mamma as soon as he awoke, so the little fellow, thoroughly tired, went into a sound slumber as soon as Mrs. Basford laid him down on the bed.

The evening was hot and "stuffy," and the window, which reached from the ceiling to the floor and was double, was wide open. Mrs. Basford commenced putting the room in order, restoring the things she had used to their places. She had finished her work, and before she began to get herself ready to go she turned to look at little Lawrie, as he lay slumbering peacefully, having her back to the window.

A tall, powerful man, in stockings only, sprang noiselessly through the open window, seized Mrs. Basford at the back of her neck with his right hand, at the same time thrusting a gag into her mouth with his left; three others followed also in their stockings only, one slipped on the handcuffs,

another took her head, and a third her feet, and lifting her up, put her gently across the foot of the bed, and in an instant had her firmly bound by ropes to the bed posts.

Green, for it was he who sprang first into the room, went to the door, and, turning the key gently, let out his companions and then locked the door on the outside, and put the key into his pocket. They met no one on the stairs, for the lodgers were nearly all out seeking fresh air, and they got to the door of the room where the delegates were shouting and shrieking at each other. Two of them put their broad shoulders to the door and burst it in.

"Surrender," cried Green.

Richard Basford heard the crash, he knew the cause, he poised himself for a moment with his hands on the window sill and then let go. He struck first against a tree growing out of a crevice of the rock, a

branch of which he caught, but after holding him a few seconds it gave way, landing him for an instant on his feet on a projecting ledge of rock, from which he fell headlong into the river. A day or two before there had been a heavy thunderstorm, and the rain, which had fallen in torrents, had raised the height of the water considerably. It was then subsiding, but a much greater body of water than usual was still in the river, and he escaped the danger of falling into shallow water, and being a powerful swimmer struck off down the stream.

The sudden appearance of the constables petrified the delegates, and the officers speedily and without the least shew of resistance, handcuffed them in three threes and a two.

Green, leaving his companions in charge, opened the street door, which was locked, and going to the mouth of the passage, said to Mr. Robert, "All right, Sir," and then salut-

ing the Chief, who had ridden up on horseback, said, "Eleven, Sir; one escaped through the window and leapt into the river."

"Which," said the Chief.

"Basford," replied Green.

A look of disappointment came over the Chief's face, and he muttered, "Confound him! the best bag of all lost. He must be the devil himself to take such a leap. Have you taken that soldier fellow?"

"No, Sir," said Green, "he was not there."

It was fortunate for the constables that the "soldier fellow" was not there, for if he had been the evening's proceedings might have had a different result.

Green then turned to Mr. Robert, and said, "Your boy is safe, Sir; you will find him in the attic; the room door faces the stairs. Here is the key. Basford's wife is tied to the bedposts. Don't loosen her. I must speak to my Chief first about her. Go upstairs gently and unlock the door

quietly, or you may frighten the boy. I left him fast asleep. You must be so good as to let me have two of your people, there are only four of us. Take two of the others yourself, and you had better send the remaining one to tell Mrs. de Noel."

Beckoning to the landlord of the Red Dragon, who stood on his steps, he told him to inform the two men in the back parlour that they might go home. Then returning to the room where the delegates were in custody, he ordered two of his men and Mr. Robert's clerks to handcuff themselves to the four batches of prisoners, one to each batch, and then gave orders to march.

Green and another constable led the way, the prisoners followed, and the Chief on horseback brought up the rear. Before marching Green told Mr. Robert that he might release Basford's wife.

Jem and Clogs had had half-an-hour's

friendly conversation together. Jem got to know from Clogs where he lived, but to the same question about himself said nothing.

He told Clogs he had a good deal to learn, and offered to give him some day a lesson in boxing. As Green passed the passage leading to the scene of the late passage at arms he blew a shrill whistle. Jem shook hands again with Clogs, and running into the street followed the procession, as if he had not taken any part in the proceedings.

Mr. Robert mounted the stairs immediately on receiving the key from Green. He noiselessly unlocked the door, and there lay Lawrie still wrapt in childhood's slumber. Mrs. Basford was in a swoon, and the appearance of the bed shewed that she had not moved a limb after being fastened down by the constables.

Mr. Robert took up his little boy, and,

murmuring a prayer of thanksgiving over his still sleeping form, descended the stairs, and it was not until he had gained the court that Lawrie opened his eyes. The little fellow stared wildly about him. In an instant recognising his father, he threw his arms round his neck and said,—

"Oh, dear Papa; oh, dear Papa, where is Mamma?"

Before leaving the room in the attic Mr. Robert gave directions to the two clerks to release Mrs. Basford. This they did, but it was not until they had bathed her face with cold water that she recovered consciousness. She sat upright on the edge of the bed, and looked wildly round her, and then, turning to the pillow where she had laid little Lawrie down, she put her hand to her forehead and said mournfully, "No; it was not to be." Then she asked after her husband; she seemed to know

by intuition that the constables had been in the house, and being told that he had escaped, she said, " Thank God."

The two clerks then left her to herself.

CHAPTER X.

A SUPPER PARTY.

GREAT was the excitement when Lawrie reached the Close.

Mrs. Robert stood on the steps and clasped him in her arms; his brothers and sisters crowded round him, kissing him over and over again; the servants stood in the back ground, the females weeping with joy.

Mr. Henry felt that the hall was not wide enough for his overflowing feelings and remained in the dining room, where he had ample range for his emotions, and when Mrs. Robert entered the room with Lawrie in her arms he kissed him, exclaiming,—

"My dear little boy; yes, dear Madam,

I was wretch enough,—oh, how delighted I am"—not being able to finish one sentence by reason of the crowding of the next upon it. He had had the fiddle and rocking-horse brought into the room, and seizing the former, and putting out the right foot as if about to dance, he extracted a jig tune from it; then laying it down, he put the rocking-horse in motion, and made Joseph get astride it to shew off its wonderful properties.

It was not until then that Mrs. Robert discovered the derangement of his apparel, and, laughing heartily, she said,—

"Cousin, your waistcoat is inside out."

"Oh, my dear Madam, what does it matter? It's a wonder I put it on at all."

He then became aware of the liberty he had taken with King George the Third, and the exchange of shoes, and made many apologies to Mrs. Robert for infringing the proprieties of society, on which she gave

his good honest cheek a kiss and, smiling, said she entirely forgave him.

The servants had not had an opportunity of greeting Lawrie on his return. So Mrs. Robert had the celebrated malt wine put on the table with cake, and told the servants to come in one at a time.

Lawrie's old nurse, who had been over 30 years in the family, entered first; Lawrie ran to her and kissed her over and over again. She then went to the sideboard and helped herself, at Mrs. Robert's request, to cake and wine. Taking the glass in her hand and making a curtsey, she said,—

"My humble respects to the family and my love to Master Lawrie," and then gave place to the other female domestics, who went through the same ceremony.

Mr. Robert's man-servant followed next, an old servitor who, like his master, said but little; he pulled his forelock and said

that he would serve his master to his dying day, and was as glad to see Master Lawrie back as if he had got the fortune. This referred to a claim which he had put in as heir-at-law to a mythical personage who had died nearly a hundred years before, leaving vast estates to his next of kin and innumerable claimants.

Then entered Joseph, and Mr. Henry appealed to him in feeling terms to tell the assembled company whether he had not accused himself of being the author of all the trouble, and whether he had not offered to scour the country in the yellow carriage, to all of which Joseph gave an emphatic assent, and wound up by imbibing, by mistake of course, some fine "old Jamaica," instead of the malt wine.

As to the clerks, Mrs. Robert's kind heart had provided for their having a

share in the festivities of the occasion. She, feeling sure of Lawrie's return, had given directions for an excellent supper, and they were invited to share this in the dining-room instead of at their usual separate table in the servants' hall.

All the children except "Baby" were to be of the party, and little Lawrie, refreshed with his evening sleep, and highly delighted with his rocking-horse and fiddle, was quite sure that he could keep awake.

Mr. Henry, now fully conscious of his shortcomings in regard to his attire, had called Joseph to assist in the restoration of the outward man. The lace cravat was again neatly tied, George III. no longer appeared to be standing on his head, the waistcoat was turned right side out, the shoes fitted to their respective partners, and the fine old head underwent a second edition of powder; but he complained that

Joseph let fall a good deal down his neck, and that he was not as steady in his movements as usual.

The watch could not be found and Mr. Henry could give no account of it. Joseph searched all over the room, going down on his hands and knees; at last a happy thought struck him, and he looked under the pillow, from which he drew the missing article; but it was not going, the spring had been broken by overwinding.

At nine o'clock the supper was served.

Mr. Robert relaxed the sternness of his features. Mrs. Robert's sweet smile was more radiant than ever. All the children were in high spirits, and the sound of gentle laughter even floated from the clerks' table.

Little Lawrie was the guest of the evening.

Some fine old Madeira was substituted for the malt wine, and Mr. Henry, when

calling upon all to fill their glasses, insisted upon half filling Master Lawrie's glass. Rising from his chair, he turned to Mr. and Mrs. Robert, and said,—

"My dear cousins, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is my pleasing duty to propose the toast of the evening. I feel sure that you will all anticipate it; it is that of my dear little godson, who has been mercifully rescued from the hands of those infernal Radicals. Let us hope that he will live long to serve God and honour the King, and that he will possess all the graces of his father and all the manly virtues of his mother."

Mrs. Robert laughed one of her gentle laughs, and Mr. Robert actually smiled, and the clerks had some difficulty in restraining their merriment within the bounds of propriety.

"I beg pardon, my dear Madam; I did not mean that. I meant that I hoped

Lawrie would have all the virtues of his mother and all the vices of his father."

Loud laughter went round the table—even the clerks could not control themselves.

"No, no," said the old gentleman, "I did'nt mean that either. Again I beg pardon, dear Madam. I meant—" and here he plunged his right hand into the capacious pocket of his waistcoat, and began to search for the draft of his speech, carefully prepared that afternoon.

"We know, dear cousin," said Mrs. Robert, stretching her hand past Lawrie, who sat in his little high chair on his mother's right, and placing it on his arm, "what you mean—we know that you love us all, and you know that we love and respect you very much; so you need not take out any paper to prove what you mean, and we will drink little Lawrie's health as you propose."

So the old gentleman sat down much relieved in mind, and all drank Lawrie's health, and the little fellow swallowed the half glass of Madeira, and shortly afterwards wanted to tell the story of Jonah in the whale's belly.

The Cathedral clock struck ten, and in a few minutes Tombs's stentorian voice was heard calling, "Past ten o'clock."

Mrs. Robert, after whispering to her husband, sent the servant to tell Tombs to come to the house, an invitation which Tombs readily accepted.

"Here's Tombs, Sir," said the servant.

"Let him come in," said Mrs. Robert, "and the dog too; he must not be forgotten."

The broad-brimmed hat, the woollen nightcap, the lantern, Tombs and Tray, presented themselves at the door of the dining-room.

"Keep on your hat, Tombs," said Mrs.

Robert, a suggestion grateful to Tombs' feelings, as he knew that his hat and night-cap were inseparable. "You shall have something hot."

She told the servant to bring him a good glass of old Jamaica "hot"—and cutting up a delicate slice for Tray on a plate gave it to the dog, with a pat on the head and the promise of a nice collar.

Tombs regarded this proceeding with satisfaction, and said,—

"Its fort'nate, Marm, that the dowg had had his supper last night afore he picked up the glove, or may be he'd have swallowed it."

The old man took his tumbler of rum and, before tasting it, said,—

"My humble respects to Master and Missus and all their family, and may they have more on 'em, and, as I said to Tray last night, he won't find a better door step nor this."

Mr. Robert then said,—

"Tombs, we are greatly indebted to you for the discovery you made last night. It was of the first importance, and under Providence enabled us to recover our lost child. Here is a five pound note for you, and every Saturday you will find five shillings waiting your acceptance."

Old Tombs was greatly delighted; he ran over in his own mind how many scores at the "Red Dragon" it would pay for, and, expressing his gratitude, went on his beat.

Tray was not without his reward. Mrs. Robert gave him a handsome brass collar, with the words "From Lawrie to Tray" engraved on it.

The next morning the household in the Close were later in rising than usual. The festivities of the previous evening had not terminated until after eleven, and each one felt the excitement and anxieties of the preceding day.

Somewhat, therefore, to the annoyance of Mrs. Robert, Mrs. Smyley made her appearance about ten o'clock in her sedan chair, just at the time when all the business of the house was in arrear, and everybody was trying to make up for lost time.

However Mrs. Robert received her very kindly, for her gentle nature was incapable of denying her.

"My dear sister," said Mrs. Smyley, "I have called to condole with you about the disappearance of little Lawrie, and to offer you a Christian sister's sympathy."

Mrs. Robert joyfully replied that he had been restored to them, and shortly explained the circumstances.

"Then, dear sister," said Mrs. Smyley, "it is doubly incumbent upon you to kneel before the Almighty. You have had both a loss and a gain. I came to spend a short time in religious devotion with you and your household, and you will not, I know,

permit any earthly things to interfere between you and your manifest duty. Call in the servants, my dear sister, and we will at once proceed. Mr. Henry, too, will no doubt be delighted to unite with us; it is an opportunity seldom afforded to him. I fear that he walks in darkness, and I shall be glad indeed if I can be the humble instrument in rescuing him from the paths of unrighteousness."

Mrs. Robert was puzzled what to do.

"Oh, if it had been any other day," she said to herself, and meekly suggested that they had been so excited with late events that all the household affairs were behindhand, and if Mrs. Smyley could only—here she stopped, hoping Mrs. Smyley would fall in with the half-expressed "another day."

But Mrs. Smyley rather sharply took her to task, and said that there was no time like the present time, that a clear and

manifest duty ought not to be postponed for an hour; and that she ought not to incur such an awful responsibility.

Poor Mrs. Robert, half frightened, gave her consent, and at Mrs. Smyley's request sent word to the chairmen to take the sedan chair round into the garden, and when they had done so they were to come into the house and join in the devotions.

Whilst the conversation was going on, Mr. Henry was in the drawing-room revising and correcting the speech that he ought to have delivered on the previous evening thinking it possible that the "Lumechester Chronicle" might yet require it for publication in connection with its report of the proceedings on the 16th. He was in a particularly happy mood. His goldheaded cane had been forwarded to him that morning with the Chief-Constable's compliments; the coach builder had sent word

that he had restored the yellow coach to its pristine perfection at a slight expense; little Lawrie had had a long ride on the rocking-horse, and had kept the teeth of all the household on edge by his performances on the fiddle; and he met Mrs. Robert as she entered the drawing-room with one of his kindly smiles and courtly bows, and placing a chair for her took another by her side.

There was a look of anxiety in Mrs. Robert's face which surprised Mr. Henry, for he thought that all care had vanished with the recovery of Lawrie. So his simple mind jumped at all kinds of conclusions.

"Nothing the matter with my cousin Robert, I hope?" said Mr. Henry.

"Oh, dear, no," said Mrs. Robert "but"—

"But what, my dear Madam; pray tell me, has his bank broke?"

"Not that either," said Mrs.Robert laughing, "it's only Mrs. Smyley, who has just arrived, and wants"—here she hesitated—"and wants to have prayers, a short sermon, and you to join us."

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the room the old gentleman's face could scarcely have expressed more astonishment.

"Prayers and a sermon, my dear Madam," he exclaimed. "Thank God I go to church every Sunday morning, and what more can she expect me to do?"

"But, my dear cousin," said Mrs. Robert, with her winning smile, "won't you do it to oblige me? For though Mrs. Smyley is rather exacting she does much good, and I should be sorry if her feelings were hurt."

"My dear Madam," said Mr. Henry, "command me. I've heard of Dr. Smyley's doings, and I consider him nothing but a Methodist in disguise, but I will obey you

rather than Mrs. Smyley should give you a moment's unhappiness."

So gallantly giving his arm to Mrs. Robert he led her into the dining-room, where were already assembled all the children (except little Lawrie, whom Mrs. Robert kept out of the way lest he should hear something about his deliverance from the Jesuits) and the servants and the two chairmen.

Mrs. Robert was not aware of certain peculiarities of Mr. Henry. She had not attended the service at Whicham Church, and did not know that the old gentleman was in the habit of making a running commentary, not only on the liturgy, but also on the sermons, from the deep recess of his high-backed pew; a habit which had become so familiar to the Vicar and the congregation generally that no one took any notice of it; had she been she would have thought twice before asking him to

take part in this extemporised morning service.

Mrs. Smyley rising from her seat and kneeling, all the rest followed her example. Mr. Henry, owing to his maimed arm, took more time than the rest, but having fairly settled down was as devout as any of them.

Mrs. Smyley began by a general exhortation to thankfulness, and then dwelt especially upon the restoration of Lawrie, observing that all their hearts were full of joy and thankfulness, whereupon Mr. Henry interjected, "So they are—all of us."

Mrs. Smyley paused a moment, and then proceeded to say that in all our ways we ought to recognize the hand of Providence.

"No doubt about it," interjected Mr. Henry.

Mrs. Smyley again paused, and then went on to say that "all who did not do so seriously erred."

"Of course they do," chimed in Mr. Henry.

Another pause.

Mrs. Smyley then dwelt upon the punishment due to sinners, impressing upon those present that the sins of the fathers would be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation.

This was a particularly objectionable doctrine to Mr. Henry, against which he never failed to protest in his own village church, believing it to have been invented by the Methodists, and so he interjected, "Great shame if they were."

Mrs. Smyley then rose, and her example was followed by the others, who all left the room except Mrs. Robert and Mr. Henry, a slight titter coming from the domestics.

"My dear sister," said Mrs. Smyley, "I must depart; these interruptions to the service are too great. I will simply hand you this little paper before I go."

On looking at it Mrs. Robert read as follows:—

Mrs. Robert de Noel,
To Dr. Smyley.

	s.	d.
To a set of Dr. Smyley's hymns	7	6
Ditto Sermons	7	6
To account delivered	15	0
Total	£1 10	0

Mrs. Robert smiled, and taking out her purse put down the amount without a word, although she had quite a large stock of those valuable publications already, whereon Mrs. Smyley observed that the books would be found on the hall table, and kissing Mrs. Robert, and moving very stiffly to Mr. Henry, she ordered the sedan chair round and departed, accompanied by Mrs. Robert to the door.

When the aforesaid ancient machine was brought round it was occupied by no less a personage than little Lawrie.

Whenever he heard of Mrs. Smyley's arrival he played the truant, hiding himself away until Mrs. Smyley had commenced her ministrations, when he would leave his place of concealment and institute a strict survey and examination of Mrs. Smyley's property. He usually began that process by getting in at one side window and out at the other, then for variety's sake getting in and out of the front window, then trying the strength of the poles, sometimes disturbing the equilibrium so much as to endanger the upsetting of the structure ; then opening the door and seating himself inside and putting up the window, he would indulge in an ideal journey,the chairmen being clothed in scarlet and gold liveries. On this occasion he fell asleep, and the chairmen, unconscious of the passenger inside, carried him and the chair to the front door.

Mrs. Smyley, looking very serious, stood

on the steps, and on the door being opened discovered the sleeping Lawrie.

She had been so put out by Mr. Henry that she had forgotten to ask to see the child, and as she was not a bad-hearted woman, the sight of him soothed her ruffled temper, and telling one of the chairmen to lift him out of the chair gently, she gave him a kiss, on which he awoke.

Now little Lawrie's adventures had given his nerves a shock, and frequently during the previous night he had felt for his nurse's nightcap, to make himself sure that it was really his nurse who was in bed with him and not Mrs. Basford, who had slept without that appendage.

On opening his eyes and seeing Mrs. Smyley peering at him through her spectacles from the deep recess of her coal-scuttle bonnet, Lawrie gave a shriek as if this were a new horror, but seeing his mother on the steps he was satisfied.

Mrs. Smyley said a few kind words, hoped he was learning Dr. Smyley's hymns off by heart, and put a new shilling into his hand, which highly delighted him.

Mr. Henry was wholly unable to comprehend what new crime he had committed which had caused Mrs. Smyley's sudden departure, for he perceived from her manner to him that she regarded him as the cause. He felt quite clear in his own mind that he had done nothing to offend the old lady, and was certain that Mrs. Robert had not; therefore, when Mrs. Robert returned after seeing Mrs. Smyley off, she found him in a very perplexed state.

"What does all this mean, my dear Madam?" he said. "I understood that we were to have a sermon as well as prayers, and Mrs. Smyley scarcely acknowledged me when she left the room."

"Cousin," said Mrs. Robert, looking

rather grave, "Mrs. Smyley is very peculiar, and to tell you the truth she felt annoyed at your interposing in the prayers."

"But, my dear Madam," said Mr. Henry, "how could I pass by such a doctrine as she started. Suppose little Lawrie's great grandfather had stolen a sheep, ought Lawrie to be hung for it?"

The simple common sense of the old gentleman, though it did not in the least shake her belief in the dogma, could not but win her heart, and she said,—

"Well, dear cousin, you perhaps won't object to smooth matters over with Mrs. Smyley if you have an opportunity."

"Not in the least, my dear Madam, and before I leave I will make a point of calling upon her."

CHAPTER XI.

A BOLD DRAGOON.

Mrs. Robert having got through her manifold household duties had Lawrie to sit with her, and the little fellow told her in his child-like way how Basford had seized him, and taken off his cap, and wrapped him up in a shawl, and given him to his wife, and the two then ran off with him; how much he had cried, and that Mrs. Basford had no nightcap on like nurse, and how frightened he was when he saw her in bed, and how kind she was the next morning, and had washed him, and combed and curled his hair, and that he said his prayers, and told her the story of Jonah in the whale's belly and

other Bible stories, and how she cried afterwards and kissed him; and from all this Mrs. Robert arrived at the conclusion that Mrs. Basford had been very kind to her little son. Then she shuddered, for she thought that possibly she wanted to keep him and make a factory boy of him, and what if she should hang about the house and take an opportunity of carrying him off again; and it made her look very pensive, and she rang the bell, and told the old nurse her fears, and said she must be very careful not to let him go out alone, and even if she was with him never to let him lag behind, with many other directions such as a fond mother would give.

But supposing Mrs. Basford merely did all this because she felt for the child on account of his being taken from his mother, then was it not kind of her? and when Mr. Robert spoke of her being

gagged, and tied to the bedposts, she could not help crying at one so kind to her child being so harshly treated, and she felt a womanly sympathy for Mrs. Basford.

When Mr. Robert called at the police office on the morning after Lawrie's recovery, to hand over the reward of £100 to the Chief-Constable (he had previously made each of the clerks engaged in the affair a handsome present), that officer had a perturbed and anxious look which so struck Mr. Robert that he expressed a hope that nothing very serious was the matter.

"Not exactly serious—at all events not at present, but it may become so," and he then proceeded to explain to Mr. Robert that reports had been sent in to him from different suburbs of Lumechester of numerous highway robberies by a tall, powerful man of soldier-like bearing; that they had commenced immediately on the break

up of the meeting on the sixteenth, and had been carried on up to midnight of that day, and up to midnight of the following day, and although he had sent constables in different directions he could gain no clue to his whereabouts. Presenting a long pistol of foreign workmanship at his victims' heads he demanded their money or their life, and had been successful in obtaining a large sum. His depredations were continued even in broad daylight, and his cunning and discernment were such that he usually stopped those who had money upon them, several being persons entrusted with large sums to pay wages at factories.

Whilst the Chief and Mr. Robert were in conversation, a constable came into the room and said that Mr. Rutherford wanted to see the Chief immediately, and that he was at the door.

The Chief told the man to shew Mr.

Rutherford into the room, and the latter, apparently much agitated, entered. He shook hands with Mr. Robert and congratulated him on the restoration of his child, and Mr. Robert was about to leave when Mr. Rutherford asked him to stay.

The latter then stated to the Chief that about half-past nine that morning he had left his house on the Whicham Road, and had only gone a few yards from the lodge gate, when a tall, powerful man leapt over the fence at the side of the road, and presenting a pistol at his head exclaimed, "Your money or your life;" that there being nobody by to assist him, he took some gold out of his pocket and offered it to the man, who took it, and said, "I want more," and threatening him with instant death if he did not deliver up all he had, compelled him to hand over a roll of bank notes to a large amount.

As Mr. Rutherford told his story the

Chief's countenance grew darker and darker.

"This will never do," said he. He rang the bell. "Send Green here."

Green entered the room.

"Green," said the Chief, "we must take this highwayman dead or alive."

He then told him the pith of Mr. Rutherford's story, and took down in writing a most minute description of his personal appearance.

"We'll have him," said the Chief, "before this time to-morrow, or my name isn't what it is."

"I feel no doubt, Green, it is that soldier-fellow. Take what men you like, and make what disposition you like, but the man must be taken, or we shall all get into disgrace."

Green left the room.

The Chief, turning to Mr. Robert, said—"It is such things as these," holding up

Mr. Robert's bank note, that make my men what they are—that man Green would face the devil himself, and so I believe would the others."

That afternoon, four tall, powerful men—one judging by his tool bag, a carpenter, another apparently a mason, and two others looking like bricklayers—stood on the bank of the canal which ran through the southern suburbs of Lumechester, looking at a factory boy who sat on the bank with a fishing-rod, absorbed in that dullest of all amusements.

"Thou'st got a bite," shouted out the carpenter, "moind and land him."

"Oh, thou fewle," called out the mason, "thou'st lost him;" and the nearer that a tall, military-looking man approached the group, the more intent they all seemed on the sport.

"Try another wum," said one of the bricklayers, and they all laid their heads together

to select the best worm out of the factory boy's worm box.

The military-looking man got up to the group, and seemed inclined to stop, but merely giving a look at them passed on.

The carpenter said, in what he intended for a whisper, "That's him!" which the military-looking man evidently overheard, for he turned round and looked at them.

"Here, my man," said the mason, "I want to speak to thee."

"What do you want with me?" was the reply, and he drew from his breast a long double-barrelled pistol.

The mason rushed forward, head down, the carpenter by his side. A bullet whistled between their heads.

The mason had the man round the waist instantly; the carpenter twisted the pistol out of his hand; the two bricklayers grappled his legs, and they all fell to the ground together.

The man had the strength of Hercules. He had fallen on his face, and using his arms to raise himself, put his right hand into the breast pocket of his coat, and the long shining blade of a dagger was all but free from its sheath, when the factory boy, darting between the mason and the carpenter, seized the right wrist with both his hands. The mason dealt the man two terrible blows on the head with his mallet, the carpenter slipped on handcuffs, and the "soldier fellow" was a prisoner; his right wrist was handcuffed to the mason's left, and his left to the carpenter's right.

"Thank God," said the mason, who was no other than Green, "we've got him at last."

"D—— you," said the man; "if I'd got out that dagger I'd have killed you all."

"I do believe you would," said Green, quietly, "and it's fortunate for us you didn't. We owe that to Jem."

As the man was marched through the streets to the police office, even Green's tall and powerful frame was dwarfed by comparison with that of his prisoner.

The man had been in the Scots Greys. He was admitted to be the strongest man and best swordsman in his regiment, and one of the finest horsemen. He might have been regimental sergeant-major, and even commissioned officer, but no sooner was he promoted than his loose habits caused his reduction to the ranks. He had served in the Peninsular War with distinguished bravery, and was with his regiment at the crowning victory of Waterloo. He rode in the decisive charge of heavy cavalry, and singling out a group consisting of an officer and two privates of the Cuirassiers attacked them alone. He slew the two privates, and then, turning to the officer, cleft through his gold-mounted helmet to his chin, then dismounting he took from the still quiver-

ing body a brace of highly ornamented pistols and a purse, and in the latter found a card, "Le Duc de Belle-Chasse."

Master Lawrie, in the afternoon, held a kind of reception at the Close. His adventure had spread far and wide.

Soon after dinner Mrs. Robert's second cousin made her appearance, a Miss Vandaleur, of the mature age of 65. She had a face which indicated that in her youth she had possessed remarkable beauty, and she had done her utmost to preserve that much esteemed but oft denied female qualification, and had succeeded admirably by calling in the aid of those appliances which at that time had disappeared from a lady's toilet, but had been of universal application in her youth, and which she had not relinquished, and in fact could not relinquish, without her face presenting that withered, sallow, and used-up appearance which

invariably follows the long use of cosmetics.

Oh! ye youthful maidens of this favoured Isle, whose breezes bring roses to the cheeks. Nature is the artist, why do ye persist in destroying her wonderful work with the hairdresser's powder? Do you think that men don't see through the flimsy disguise, and laugh at the suicidal folly which destroys one of woman's most precious gifts from God—a beautiful complexion?

Miss Vandaleur's delicate applications were equally as successful as they were necessary. A little round patch of black court plaster was cunningly placed at the most telling point of her face, and brought out in a strong contrast the marble whiteness of her skin. Her powdered hair was drawn back from her forehead, and mounted up with tasteful ties at the back of her head. Her lace excited the envy

of her female friends. Her dress, full of taste, both in colour and make, was looped up so as to shew a neatly-turned ancle, clad in white silk stockings, and her small feet were encased in high-heeled shoes, fastened with silver buckles. The rings on her delicate hands were antiques of great value.

She had apartments in the Close; so, simply throwing a white lace shawl over her head, fastened with a choice brooch at the neck, and taking her ivory-handled cane, mounted in silver, she made her way to Mr. Robert's house.

Though Mr. Robert, who had a touch of the Puritan about him, often flung a slight sneer at the "frivolous old woman," as he sometimes called her when his temper was a little ruffled; yet, as his wife's relative, he always treated her with the highest respect. She was welcome to his house, and was, indeed, almost a daily visitor there.

How was it that the old lady shewed a little nervousness when she knocked at the door? Must we let you into the secret at once, gentle reader?

The fact is that she and Mr. Henry being thrown together on the occasions of the annual visits of the latter to Mr. and Mrs. Robert, she had formed a sentimental attachment to Mr. Henry, whose courtly and deferential manner to her had not been without its effect.

As she entered the drawing-room she found Mrs. Robert, her eldest daughter, Lawrie, and Mr. Henry there. She saluted the two ladies with a sincerely affectionate kiss, and turning towards Mr. Henry gave a high-bred curtsey, which the latter returned with a profound bow, and then, asking the privilege of kissing her hand, he saluted it with much respect not unmingled with admiration, which Miss Vandaleur perceiving, blushed slightly.

Lawrie had secured her cane on her entering the room, and, converting it into a prancing steed, was in wild career, when Miss Vandaleur requested him to come and kiss her, and having done so he remounted his horse and started off afresh.

"More beautiful than ever" said Mr. Henry, handing her a chair, and taking another by her side. "A very Ninon d'Euclos." Whereupon Miss Vandaleur gave him a tap with her fan on his cheek and called him "un vieux galant," which Mrs. Robert and her daughter observing, they indulged in gentle laughter.

Then entered the two gaunt unmarried daughters of one of the principal solicitors of the place. Elderly ladies, of a sedate turn of mind, and who, having nothing to engage their attention at home, spent every afternoon in making calls. Having in measured sentences expressed their pleasure at Lawrie's restoration, they proceeded

to state their opinion that those low people should be kept down with a high hand, and that their father was engaged in drafting out a Bill which he would ask the Government to introduce into Parliament, giving local authorities permanent and summary power to put down popular disturbances in manufacturing districts.

Mr. Henry, who had now become involved in a distinct flirtation with Miss Vandaleur, overhearing this, expressed his strong approval, and offered to give evidence, if necessary, in favour of the Bill.

Mr. Witcombe was then announced. A tall, thin, serious-looking man of about fifty, dressed in a black suit, a little faded but well kept, and standing behind a monstrous white cravat, which so beset him around that when he turned to speak it was necessary that his shoulders should work in unison with his neck. He wore a brown wig.

Mr. Witcombe had the habit of opening his mouth before beginning to speak, and so keeping it until the inward working of the brain attained such a force as enabled him to give vent to the overpowering intellect.

Having uttered the words expressive of his thoughts for the time being, the mouth again opened, and so remained until the intellectual pumping apparatus had again expended its energy.

Mr. Witcombe, owing to the paucity of his speech, had obtained a high character for wisdom. The forces which lay hidden under that brown wig were acknowledged on all hands to be enormous. Even Mr. Robert admitted them, and consulted Mr. Witcombe (the only person except his wife whom he ever did consult) on important occasions.

Mr. Witcombe, advancing to Mrs. Robert, took her hand, opened his mouth,

and Mrs. Robert, knowing that the volcano must have time to expend itself, broke the silence, saying,—

"It is very good of you, Mr. Witcombe, to come so soon. You see Lawrie is all right."

Lawrie had paused in the midst of a furious charge—having by this time surrounded himself in imagination with attendant horsemen—to look into the vast cavern disclosed by Mr. Witcombe's open mouth, which so frightened him, that on the latter putting out his arms to lift him up and kiss him, he ran from the room, and took shelter under his nurse's apron, and remained with her until "Chisel Tom" came and asked could he see Master Lawrie.

Tom was a joiner by trade, and carried on his handicraft in an ancient tumble-down cottage not far from Mr. Robert's house. He used to do any work in his line required there, and Lawrie and he

were great friends, as he used to experiment with Tom's tools whenever he came, and when he could slip out unknown to his nurse he was pretty sure to be found in Tom's workshop.

Lawrie had taken a fancy to boat building, and was encouraged therein by Tom, who promised that when he was a little older he would show him how to make a big ship.

Tom was asked in, and it was a pleasure to see the honest emotions of delight which he showed at Lawrie's escape. The two arranged that the big ship should be commenced at once, and Lawrie, taking out of his pocket the new shilling given to him by Mrs. Smyley, offered it to Tom, but the latter with many thanks declined to accept it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "NANCY" BARGE.

It was fortunate for Richard Basford that he had lost his coat on the previous day, for had his strong arms been encumbered with it his career might have ended with drowning. He swam with the current for nearly a mile, when he landed quite exhausted, and first breathing a short prayer of thanksgiving that his life had been spared, stood for a moment—hidden from the view of those on the opposite shore by the piled up cargo of a barge moored to the wharf, and from the view of those on the same side by the bearing wall of the street above—considering what he should do.

A tap on the back with the end of a

boat hook made him look round, when he perceived a female figure in the aft of the barge, close to the door of the little cabin opening on the uncovered lower deck. She beckoned him in, and, pointing to the cabin, bade him, in a whisper, enter.

It was a small place about eight feet square; an oil lamp hung from the roof, a small cooking stove was at the further end, from each side of which to the door ran a locker, forming store places for provisions, clothes, and bedding. A narrow turn-down fixed table stood in the centre, and before the decaying fire lay a wicked-looking lurcher dog, which eyed Basford with no amiable look.

The woman was cheery-looking, short and stout, with bronzed face, clad in a man's jacket, short woollen petticoat, and thick hob-nailed boots laced up to the ankle.

As soon as Basford entered she closed the door, and, speaking in broad Lancashire, told him that she had seen him battling with the water, and felt sure the "runners" were after him, expressing her great delight that he had escaped from them, and told him that he could hide in the boat until he thought he could get away safely.

Looking compassionately at Basford's dripping clothes, she opened one of the lockers, and taking out a corduroy jacket, waistcoat, and knee-breeches, with coarse but clean shirt, and thick worsted stockings, she put them on the table along with a rough towel, and told him he had better change his clothes at once, and she would dry his own; then closing the cabin door left him to himself.

Basford breathed a sigh of relief; for he knew that after reaching the shore he stood a great chance of being arrested, as the

prison in which he had been confined several months was in the street above, just opposite to where he had landed, and there was a great chance that if he had ascended the steps leading from the wharf he might have met one of the gaolers, to whom he was well known.

He availed himself of the good woman's kindness, and, having finished his toilet, opened the cabin door and told her so with many thanks. She brewed him a cup of hot tea, to which she offered to add some rum, which he declined, and, greatly refreshed, he began to ponder on the events of the day, and, with a sorrowful heart thought of his wife, who was left without a shilling in her pocket.

In addition to the clothes, the kind woman gave him a black rabbit-skin cap. This Basford put on, and looking in the little glass which stood over the stove, it struck him that, dressed as he was, it would

be difficult to recognise him, especially if he could darken his complexion. To his joy he saw a basket of green walnuts in a corner, and, asking leave of his hostess, he broke up a number, and soon succeeded in giving himself a bronze complexion.

He took her into his confidence, and told her enough to enlist her womanly sympathies, and putting a short pipe into his mouth, and followed by the lurcher, who had made friends with him and wanted a walk, he left the barge, promising to return shortly, and mounted the steps into the street.

The officer on duty at the entrance to the prison was airing himself outside and gave a look at Basford; but the bargee dress, short pipe, and dog so well represented the kind of figure which he often saw at the top of the steps, that the suspicion of his being the

Richard Basford whom he knew so well, and whom he was aware was "wanted," never entered his head.

Basford turned to the right, and a few strides brought him to the foot of a bridge over the river which he crossed, then bending to the left, he took a narrow street running parallel to the river, and, passing through various streets and passages, found himself in the Wellgate, and made his way direct to Wellgate Court. It would appear rather a daring deed for Basford to walk, as it were, into the lion's den, but he depended upon the constables never suspecting that he would dare to return, and to the metamorphosis effected by his change of costume. He found the door open, and though several of the inmates who knew him met him on the stairs, he passed unrecognised to the door of the room where his wife had slept the preceding night. He knocked at the door, which he

found locked, and a faint voice answered, "Who is there?"

Basford in a low tone said, "A friend," and thereupon the door was gently opened, and the pale worn face of his wife peered through the opening. She did not recognize her husband; he put his fingers to his lip to indicate silence, and then said "Richard!" and entered.

She threw her arms round his neck, and low sobs followed one another.

"Mary," said he, hurriedly, "take this," putting his purse into her hand, "Get thee away as fast as thou can. I'll away to Saint Peter's in the Rocks. Go thou home; get my things and thine together, lock up the house and leave it, and come as soon as thou can, and as thou can, to Ebenezer Thorneycroft's, under the rock. Thou knowest it. Thou wilt find me there in a day or two. God bless thee," and fervently embracing her, he called off the lurcher,

which had found a rat-hole, and was sitting with uplifted ears and outstretched tail at the opening, and hastily descended the stairs.

He met Clogs, who did not know him.

That musical genius had had his spirits damped by the hard punches given him by Jem, and looked as if his self-confidence had considerably abated.

Returning by the same route he regained the barge, and found his hostess seated in the aft by the side of a rough-looking man, on to whose knees the lurcher sprung at once; this was the husband of his hostess. He had evidently been laying in a store of strong waters prior to his leaving at sunrise next morning, viâ the canal and the river which it joined, for the port whence the Lumechester manufactures were shipped for foreign parts.

The husband greeted Basford with a hearty shake of the hand, said his wife

had told him all about it, and that he was welcome to the loan of his clothes, and to a shakedown on board the barge, and either to leave in the morning before starting, or to go with him on the canal all or any part of the way.

Basford's olfactory nerves discovered a savoury smell coming from the cabin, and immediately on his arrival the bargee told him that his "missus" had got something tasty for supper, and the latter calling out that the meal was ready, Basford and his host and hostess sat down in the little cabin, where the repast was served up with nice clean linen.

Basford had been many hours without food, and the stew, consisting of a hare whose death might without injustice be laid at the lurcher's door, was very grateful to him. As the remnants were put away in a little larder in the cabin, Basford could see that there was no want of

good things in store; for a rabbit, a brace of partridges, and a fowl were hanging up, and the lurcher pricked up his ears and wagged his tail as if he recognised old acquaintances.

The night was warm, and Basford, worn out with the anxieties and efforts of the day, found comfort in a sound slumber on some new hay and a couple of horse cloths on the deck near the cabin door. The lurcher coiled himself up by his side, and his short bark shewed that his dreams were of hares and rabbits. He was roused at sunrise by the bargee to partake of a substantial breakfast. That over, the bargee proceeded to unmoor and start.

A stout lad of twenty came on board, and he and the bargee's wife set to work to get the tow rope ready, and taking it ashore, the wife harnessed herself to the end by a broad leather belt round her waist, whilst the lad fastened a similar

belt over his chest and under his arms. The two towed the boat, whilst the bargee with a long spiked pole kept the head off the shore, and helped to propel her.

Basford could not bear to see a woman engaged in such an occupation, and offered the bargee to take her place. But the latter told him to keep quiet in the cabin, as the "runners" might be about, and that his wife, being accustomed to the work, could do it better than he could.

The lurcher stationed himself on the top of the cargo, and with ears and tail erect, gave notice to the public that the "Nancy" barge was under weigh.

After they had got about a mile from the wharf two decrepid horses were seen standing on the towing path with downcast heads and drooping ears, under the care of a small boy, and the boat was then stopped. The wife and the lad slipped off their

harness, and the tow rope was fastened to the crossbar of the hindmost of the two horses; the wife got on board, the lad cracked his whip, which roused both the animals from their sleep, and quietly dragging the rope until it got "taut," they pulled upon it without jerking—the hindmost, however, being several times nearly in the water—until they got into a steady pull at the rate of about three miles an hour, the boy walking behind the animals, and cracking his whip constantly to enliven them.

Basford told his host that he would avail himself of his kindness to the point on the canal where the boundary between Lancashire and Cheshire came within a short distance, and then he could get into Cheshire, where the warrant out against him was of no avail unless "backed" by Cheshire magistrates. When clear of the town he sat in the stern, chatting with the

bargee. The latter told him that he was born on a canal boat, and had never worked at anything else but barging; that he recollected Brindley, the engineer employed by the Duke who made the canal, that he was a plain quiet man, and got no more than he did, a pound a week; and that he had heard that when they were about to let in the water, on the canal being finished, Brindley was in such a "funk" lest the banks should break down, that he went home and got into bed, where the Duke's agent found him and gave him the news that all had gone on well. He pointed out some deep holes here and there, where he was pretty sure to pull out a good perch or eel when he stopped for the night, and the best spots for snaring a hare, and where the partridges lay, and the farm-yards lying convenient to the canal, where plenty of poultry could be had.

All these spots seemed as well known to the lurcher as to his master, and a look of recognition passed between the two as the barge went slowly by.

The bargee, when they arrived at a lock, usually left his wife on board and imbibed a hearty draught of ale at the little tavern which was usually found at these stopping places, and pressed Basford to join him, but the latter, though insisting on paying for it, scarcely touched the liquor, to the great surprise of the bargee, who would then hand over Basford's share to the " missus " or the lad. In about four hours they reached the point where Basford was to leave them. He had exchanged his cloth trousers, waistcoat, and hat for the corduroy suit and rabbit-skin cap, as he thought it best to keep up his disguise. Shaking both heartily by the hand, he thanked them for their kindness, and wished the hostess to accept some silver, which she refused,

saying, "Good-bye, lad; thou art a good swimmer."

The bargee brought the tears into Basford's eyes by the hearty grip he gave him, told him he should always be glad to see him on board the "Nancy," and pointed out where he would find the high road.

The barge was brought up close to the towing path, near a wooden bridge crossing the canal, and Basford sprang on to the towing path, and was followed by the lurcher, evidently intent upon a little excursion of his own.

The bargee called him back, and waving his cap to Basford as he passed over the bridge, started the horses again.

Basford had by this time recovered his spirits; his chat with the bargee and his wife had taken off his thoughts from the events of the day before, and the fresh air, green fields, ever-changing scene and

quietude, as the barge crept lazily along, had soothed his nerves.

Crossing the bridge, he took an eastward direction along a bridle road, which, after half an hour's walk, took him into a main road, where a signboard over a tavern, "The Cheshire Cheese," told him that he was in Cheshire.

The difference between Lancashire and Cheshire, mentioned in the early part of the story, struck Basford very much.

It seemed to him as if he was in a different world; no pale-faced factory children, but strong ruddy little urchins, looking as if fed on buttermilk and potatoes and out of doors all day, met him as he strode along. The honeysuckled cottages, with little gardens in front, and white doorsteps, made him long for a peaceful life with his Mary in such a one, away from the smoke and turmoil of Lancashire.

He almost asked himself, what did he

gain by his present life? Why should he give the best of his days in association with men many of whom were nothing but impostors and cheats, shouting forth loud orations in favour of the freedom of man, when they themselves were enchained by lust and vice?

He came to a village school, over the door of which was a stone slab, stating that it had been erected and endowed by the squire. At the breaking-up hour, and as the children swarmed out like bees, clad in their little scarlet cloaks, and looking the picture of health and happiness, he could not but admit that all landlords were not "greedy."

Soon after, he crossed a village green, alive with cricketers, and was told that another squire was patron of the club, and encouraged the game by giving prizes and by paying the expenses of the club when they made matches with other clubs in

distant parts of the country, and he began to feel more charitable towards landlords in general.

Although the labourers whom he met eyed him with suspicion, yet they always gave him a civil answer when in doubt as to the right way, and in this respect the difference between the Cheshire and Lancashire labourers struck him. After a long day's walk he found himself at a cross road, and, scanning the finger-post, he found that one of the roads led to Whicham, the place at which he intended to pass the night.

Another half hour brought him to the village, of which he had heard but had never been there. He could not find any inn except the "Spotted Deer," and he was in great doubt, from the appearance of the house, whether they would allow such a rough-looking fellow as he was to stay for the night on the premises. How-

ever, he walked into the tap room, and touching his cap to the landlord said that he had come a long way, and was on the road to see his wife at Lumechester, and should feel obliged if he could lie down somewhere for the night and should be glad to pay something for it.

Basford held in his hand his rabbit-skin cap and the landlord, seeing that he had an intelligent, honest face, said that there was a bed-room over the stables which he might have for the night, and in reply to Basford's request for some refreshment he ordered for him a good meal of cold meat and bread and a pint of ale.

The villagers by this time began to come in for their evening glass and pipe, and Basford sat in a corner, not taking any part in the conversation. All the talk was about the monster meeting at Lumechester, of which they had heard a good

deal from the Whicham men of the Yeomanry who had dispersed the mob.

They had heard that Squire Noel had been knocked over and much injured, and that his godson had been carried off and taken no one knew where, and they were unanimous in their opinion as to the dangers of living in Lancashire, and thanked God that they lived in Whicham, where none of those Radicals ever came.

Basford took care to shew not the slightest interest in the conversation, and did not change countenance when one of them said that a bad fellow called Basford, the worst of the lot, was supposed to be the ringleader, and that he was a confounded ranting Methodist, and richly deserved to be hung, and he hoped he would be.

They then got upon some parish question, in discussing which they highly praised the liberality of the Earl, and something arose out of it which brought in the name

of the great Commoner, of whom they also spoke highly, and all this was not without its effect on Basford.

Fearing that some inconvenient questions might be put to him, he left the room, and went to his bed-room, where he soon fell asleep. His departure let loose the tongues of the villagers. They gave vent to opinions that he was somehow connected with the proceedings of the mob and was hiding away. They had noticed his manners as differing from those of a bargee, and were inclined to call in the village constable and have him arrested; but as that worthy was usually "in his cups" at that hour, they contented themselves with calling in the landlord, and mentioning their suspicions. He had himself not been without doubt as to the character of the stranger, but he had somewhat of the feeling of the Arab towards his guest, and poohed down the idea.

Basford rose early the following morning, and, without waiting to breakfast, started on his journey.

He felt that he had had a narrow escape; the mention of the monster meeting and his own name and Lawrie's surname (for Lawrie had told Mrs. Basford his name), had not been, he thought, without effect on his face, and he fancied that the party at the "Spotted Deer" had perceived it. Thinking that he might be watched he took the Lumechester road for a short distance, and then turning into a by-lane running eastwards, he made for Wadport, a town partly in Lancashire and partly in Cheshire, until he came to the river which ran through the town, when he followed the footpath along the bank until he came to the suburbs, when he turned to the right and followed the road to London for some distance, then bending to the left continued in a north-easterly direction.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAINT PETER'S IN THE ROCKS.

Those who knew Evendale in Yorkshire at the date of our story would, if lovers of the picturesque, gaze with admiration at the fine scenery of that romantic valley. The bold mountains, rising with precipitous sides from the valley, through which a torrent rushed with mighty force; tender plantations, hiding away in the gorges from the winds, in strong contrast with clumps of hardy trees on the summits, defying the blasts; herds of cattle grazing on the sides; white stone mills on the banks of the stream; comfortable-looking cottages, pleasant residences of small landed proprietors,

presenting altogether a combination not often seen even in England.

The population was small and was almost isolated from the rest of the world, supplying very nearly all its own wants, and forming a community, partly pastoral and partly manufacturing, which regarded those outside the valley as unworthy of notice and with whom all contact should be avoided.

The country carts carried the products of the valley to the neighbouring towns, and brought back such articles of consumption as the inhabitants required; but those who accompanied them held as little communication as possible with the "foreigners," as they called them, and frightened the inhabitants with terrible stories of the attempt to cheat them out of their goods or their money.

Leading out of the valley amongst the mountains was a bridle road, exceedingly

rugged and steep, chiefly used by the pack-horses which collected the produce of the looms of the mountaineers; for, like watch-making in Switzerland, every house was a little manufactory, where a loom could be heard at work all the day long. Some four miles from the point where the bridle road struck inward from the valley was a spot still more secluded from the world than the valley itself. It went by the name of St. Peter's in the Rocks.

It nestled at the foot of precipitous rocks, into the crevice of which the primitive dwellings forming the village had been built. Some, indeed, were on ledges of rock high above the narrow road running through it. The road itself was almost buried by the overhanging crags.

The sun, even on the brightest day, only peeped in by fitful gleams, and long before sunset in the valley, the light had departed from this strange place. The popula-

tion was between 150 and 200, wholly supporting themselves by the manufacture of woollen cloths by the hand-loom. The only place of worship, and that belonged to the Primitive Methodists, was a small room built in one of the crevices of rock, into which scarcely any light penetrated.

There was no surgeon, no constable, no shop of any kind, no public-house. The only beverage was from a never-failing spring of pure water, which, bursting out of the rock at the upper end of the village, was carried by a rough wooden conduit along the sides of the rocks, down the steep roadway to the other end of the village. At convenient points in its course, to enable the villagers to get water, cisterns had been formed in the rocks, and by a simple arrangement at the upper end, the whole of the water could be diverted so as to flush the street. Christian names from the Bible were alone given to the

children. The language of the people partook strongly of scriptural quotations. The Sabbath was truly a day of rest, for their Sunday meals were prepared on a Saturday, and, beyond a boiling kettle, no cooking was allowed on the Lord's Day.

The guiding spirit of this little community was Ebenezer Thorneycroft, a weaver like the rest, earning his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. He was the minister of the little chapel, he performed the marriage services (whether they were legal or not never troubled the simple minds of these mountaineers), he christened the children, and buried the dead. He was the doctor, the veterinary surgeon, the constable, the goaler, and the schoolmaster, and finally, he was the court, without appeal, in all cases, civil and criminal.

He was also the postmaster and letter-carrier, and he repaired the village road and the village conduit. For these multi-

farious duties he levied a small annual tribute upon all the inhabitants, which was paid more punctually than any compulsory rate in these days, and went by the name of "Peter pence." Any delay in payment of "Peter pence" was visited by the defaulter being dissociated from the others until payment.

The produce of the looms was sold and "foreign" articles were purchased through the medium of Ebenezer. At the beginning of each month he went round from house to house, and each householder stated what he wanted to sell and what he wanted to buy, and then Ebenezer, making a journey into the valley with packhorses, handed the list to one of the trustworthy carriers, who conveyed the products of the valley to one of the large towns, and he made the necessary sales and purchases, and accounted to Ebenezer, who distributed the money and goods amongst the

villagers who had entrusted their property to him, and who never had cause to regret their confidence, for he was as shrewd as he was honest.

He was a very tall, powerful man of about fifty, and cultivated, in opposition to the fashion of the day, a long flowing beard, which gave him a patriarchal look. His abode was, like himself, elevated above the rest of the village, being perched on a table rock some thirty feet above the road, to which he ascended by means of two ladders, one from the road to a small landing place, and then from the landing place to his house. This was partly hollowed out of the rock and partly projected from it. There were passages from the house leading to lofty caverns in the rock, lighted from openings above; one he used for domestic purposes, another as a warehouse for goods, and a third was the village gaol, to which was

a separate entrance by a ladder, which was placed in a crevice above and only let down when necessary.

Tradition ran that in the days of "bloody Mary" more than one persecuted Protestant had found refuge in the house which Ebenezer occupied.

On the 21st of August, Ebenezer, on leaving his bed at sunrise, as was his custom, wore a perturbed look. One of the inhabitants was charged with theft. Such a thing had not occurred for twenty years.

The supposed criminal was a man called Ephraim Norman. He had been before his marriage a quiet, hard-working man, but he had married a "foreign" woman, who was sadly given to scolding, and frequent quarrels arose between the two, which disturbed the quiet of the little village, and after living a life of bickering for two years, she took her departure from the

place, much to the relief of her neighbours, declaring that she would never return.

Her husband, left to himself, for they had no family, seemed a soured, disappointed man, and did but little work. He sometimes left his cottage and was absent for several days, and rumour said that during that time he did not lead a very regular life.

An old man, Obadiah Wilson, deaf and very infirm—he was over 80—lived alone in a cottage in the village. He was reputed to be rich. There was a small garden at the back of his cottage, in which the old man reared vegetables, and when he was too feeble to attend to it, he used to ask Ephraim to do so, and paid him a trifle, going to a shelf in his back room, where lay an old brown leather lock-up purse, and taking the money from it.

Ephraim had told his neighbours laughingly about this purse, so that they were

aware that he knew where the old man's money was kept.

On the 8th of August, the old man made his way with the help of two sticks to a neighbour's house, and told them that his purse had been burst open, and a guinea taken from it, and produced the damaged purse in proof.

Very early in the morning of that day Ephraim Norman had been seen to leave his cottage. He had a small bundle slung by a stick over his left shoulder, and the neighbours thought he was going away on one of his usual absences.

Suspicion at once attached to him, for it was easy to enter any cottage in the village in the night by simply lifting the latch, as no door was ever locked.

Ebenezer was at once informed, and in answer to his question the old man stated that he slept in the front room, that he was very wakeful the night before, and

that he was sure no one had opened the front door.

The room at the back opened into the garden, and was the depository of his cooking utensils and other matters used in his little household, as well as of his purse, and he said that the door was unlocked all night.

In the garden were found the fresh footmarks of a man, and as Norman had not locked up his cottage, these marks were compared with a pair of boots found in his room, and they corresponded exactly.

Ebenezer ascertained that Norman had passed through the valley in the direction of the town of Crosdale, and he afterwards learnt that he had been seen by one of the Evendale carriers at a tavern in the town the worse for liquor, where he had taken out a purse containing a considerable quantity of silver.

It was well known that he had been

out of work for some time, and this fact strengthened the suspicions against him.

It was not until the 15th of August that Norman returned, and as he walked up the street to his cottage he perceived that the villagers looked at him in a very strange manner, and that his associates shunned him.

He was in the act of making a fire in his front room when Ebenezer entered ; his look was stern and solemn.

"Ephraim," he said, "I come to thee at once to tell thee that thou art accused of stealing a guinea from the purse of Obadiah Wilson, on the night of the 7th August.

"Thou wast seen leaving the house very early the next morning, and I must tell thee plainly that thou wert seen on the road to Crosdale, and afterwards in the town itself, not very steady like, and had thy purse full of silver.

"But, Ephraim, I must tell thee another thing; I found foot marks in the garden, and they fitted the boots which thou left behind thee—yon boots I mean," pointing to a pair in a corner of the room.

"Now, man, wilt thou be tried by thy neighbours or wilt thou leave the place and never come back?"

"Ebenezer," said Norman, looking him full in the face, "I am not guilty. I was in the garden—"

"Well, man," interposed Ebenezer, "if thou art not guilty, and will be tried by us, don't tell thy story to me, but tell it in public before thy friends and neighbours. When wouldst thou like to be tried?"

"The sooner the better," said Norman.

"Well, then, say the third day from now, Ephraim, and I'll get my two deacons to sit with me, and see that I don't wrong thee, which God forbid."

It was on the morning of the eventful third day that Ebenezer rose looking so perturbed. He was anxious that the village should retain its character of being free from vice and crime.

The gaol was a gaol only in name, for it was twenty years since it had been inhabited, and then the prisoner was a "foreigner," taken up on suspicion of poaching. Norman had been at liberty since his interview with Ebenezer, and his resolve to stand his trial had had a favourable effect on his neighbours.

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 18th August, Ebenezer, as the judge, took his seat on a large boulder stone close to the foot of his residence, where in fine weather he preferred dispensing justice to holding a court in the dark chapel. His deacons, sedate-looking weavers, took their seats one on each side of him, on rush-bottomed chairs. The trial caused a great

sensation in the little place, a great number attended, and many brought their children to witness the proceedings as a kind of "awful warning."

Ebenezer opened the court with a short prayer, entreating the Almighty that their verdict might be a just one, and that if found guilty the accused might meet with mercy and pardon from on High.

He then addressed Norman thus:—

"Ephraim, dost thou agree to be tried by thy neighbours? If thou dost not, go thy way, and let us see thee no more. If thou dost thou shalt have a fair trial; what dost thou say?"

"I'll be tried by my neighbours," said Ephraim, who stood with both hands resting on the back of a rush-bottomed chair.

"Then, Ephraim," said Ebenezer, "I must tell thee that thou art charged with entering the house of Obadiah Wilson on the night of the 7th August, and stealing from

it a guinea, being part of some money in a brown leather lock-up purse, lying on the shelf of the back room, and the proofs against thee will be, without making a long story of it, that thou hast been heard to speak about the purse and where it was put; that Obadiah counted the money before he went to bed, locked up the purse, and put it on the shelf in the back room, where he always kept it, leaving the door unlocked; that he found the purse the next morning with a piece pulled out of one side and a guinea gone; that fresh footmarks, corresponding with thy boots, were found close to the back door; that thou wast seen to leave the house very early that morning, and did not return until the 15th; that during thy absence thou wert seen at Crosdale the worse for liquor, and shewed thy purse in a public tavern with a good deal of money in it, which was not likely to be thine, seeing that thou hast not been

working for some weeks. What dost thou say, Ephraim; art thou guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," said Norman, with a firm voice.

Ebenezer then told Obadiah Wilson to give evidence; which he did sitting, on account of his infirmities.

None of the witnesses were asked to take an oath, the villagers in their simplicity thinking that no oath was needed to stamp with truth "a good man's word."

It was to the effect stated by Ebenezer, and he produced the empty purse, which shewed a hole in its side, as if a piece of the leather, half as big again as a shilling and nearly circular, had been pulled out by the forcible action of the forefinger and thumb.

Norman took up the purse and carefully looked at it. He then asked the witness if there were any rats in his house.

He replied he believed there were "a two or three few."

He then asked the witness if the purse had any money in it besides the guinea.

He replied that it was nearly full of gold and silver pieces, and that he had counted them before going to bed, and that there were fifteen guineas then and fourteen only in the morning.

Two neighbours then gave evidence that Norman had several times spoken to them about the purse, saying where it was kept.

The village shoemaker proved having compared Norman's boots with fresh footmarks close to the back door, and that they corresponded.

Norman did not ask him any questions about the footmarks, but told him to look at the purse carefully, and he having done so, Norman asked him if he would say that the hole had not been made by a rat.

The shoemaker looked at it again and again, and at last, turning to Ebenezer, he said that he should be sorry to say positively that it had not been made by a rat, as they were, he added, "a'most as fond of leather as myself."

A man from the valley was called to prove that he saw Norman in a tavern at Crosdale the worse for liquor, and that he opened his purse, and he saw that it contained a good deal of silver money.

The fact of Norman having been idle for many weeks was notorious, and he admitted it.

The case being concluded, Ebenezer said,—

"Now, Ephraim, thou can'st or not as thou likes give thy own account of the matter. If thou think fit to hold thy tongue it won't tell against thee, because no accused man need say anything unless he likes; but if thou can'st clear up this

matter, and God grant that thou may, speak out, man, and we will all listen to thee.

Ephraim, who possessed a good tall figure and handsome face, though the latter was somewhat marked with trouble and dissipation, raised himself to his full height, and said,—

"Ebenezer and neighbours, I am not a scholar, and can't say much, but what little I do say is true.

"The shoemaker could not but say that the hole in the purse might have been made by a rat, and if it might have been made by a rat it mightn't have been made by me; it could not have been made by both, and I say that I did not make it, and Obadiah says that there are rats in his house, and that goes a long way, and I've a right to be believed.

"It isn't because I've had a bad wife that I am to be charged with stealing—that's

my misfortune not my fault—I've lived among you all my life, and I ask you if anyone can say I ever did a wrong thing to man, woman, or child. (Cries of "No, no.") I've been wronged myself, but I never wronged a single body.

"Now, I'll tell you how the footmarks and spending the money at Crosdale came about.

"My wife had often said she'd run away, and one day I found her rummaging about the drawer where I kept my things, and where I had a little money stowed away, and I asked her what she was about, and she couldn't look me in the face nor answer me, but walked away.

"I put the money in my pocket; it wasn't very much, only between four and five pounds—and as I was doing up Obadiah's garden that day, I bethought me it would be a good plan to hide it away. So I dug a hole near the back door, and putting it

in this bag (he pulled a bag from his pocket, which had all the appearance of having been for some time in the ground) I put it in the hole and covered it up, and there it was when my wife left me three months ago. I took three pounds of it out, as I was slack of work, and I'd only about thirty shillings left when I went into Obadiah's garden at daylight before I went away on the 8th, and I took up the bag and the money in it and went off to Crosdale, and there I spent a good bit of it. That's the way I got the money and not by stealing. And it's the truth, I swear before God, and maybe the guinea fell out of the bag when the rat made the hole, as the bag was full, and has tumbled down through a crack in the boards, and may be it'll be found some day."

Ephraim told his story in so manly and straightforward a way, that there was considerable applause when he had finished,

for he had been a favourite in the place until he got married, and was greatly pitied for having such a termagant of a wife, and the women whispered amongst themselves that it would be a good thing if she died, for then he could marry a "valley" girl and be steady again.

Ebenezer and the deacons laid their heads together for a few seconds, and then Ebenezer, rising, said,—

"Ephraim, thou hast cleared thyself from this charge. We are all three agreed that thou art not guilty, and we shall be glad to see thee mend thy ways and settle down to work, and maybe the Almighty has good things in store for thee yet."

About a year after the trial Obadiah Wilson died, and on the rotten flooring of the back room being taken up the guinea was found underneath, lodged in a chink in the rock, and would probably not have been found had not the story of "Obadiah's

guinea" been known to the workmen, who made a careful search for it.

Oh, ye lawyers, tied and bound by precedent and usage, can ye find nothing in this story to lead you to admit the possibility that truth presented in rough words by a man in fustian may be more conducive to justice than well turned phrases and strange hypotheses from a man in silk? Why should not fustian be able to give evidence in his own favour if, feeling his innocence, he wishes to make his own statement of a transaction of which he alone is able to give a satisfactory explanation?

CHAPTER XIV.

A WOMAN OF COURAGE.

As soon as her husband left her, Mary Basford lost no time in preparing to depart homeward. Although nearly ten o'clock she determined to walk to Drawbridge that night. She dreaded the idea of staying at Lumechester another night. The sweet face of Lawrie and dark figure of Green alike haunted her, and she scarcely knew which harassed her the most.

Bidding good-bye to the "next door," and leaving some silver in return for her occupation of the room, she made the best of her way through the town and soon gained the outskirts, where she was so

fortunate as to overtake another Drawbridge woman, who had been spending the day with her married daughter in Lumechester, and the lively chat of the other about her daughter, and how good her husband was to her, drew off Mrs. Basford's thoughts from herself, and she reached home in better spirits than when she started.

She had the consolation of knowing that her husband was not in the hands of the "runners," and that she might hope to rejoin him in three or four days.

After thanking a kind Providence for his mercies to herself and imploring him to watch over and preserve her husband, she lay down on her bed and slept soundly until daylight, when she set earnestly to work to comply with her husband's request to get their things together, and go to Ebenezer Thorneycroft's at St Peter's in the Rocks as soon as possible.

There were many things she had to do. She knew that her husband had neither clothes nor linen, except those which he had on when he last saw her in Wellgate Court, and the idea of going to St. Peter's in the Rocks without a proper supply of both was not to be thought of.

Her husband and she had spent a couple of days with Ebenezer Thorneycroft about a year before.

The two had matters to arrange in relation to the Primitive Methodist Connexion, and she had noticed how very cleanly in their persons and habits the villagers were, owing probably to the plentiful supply of pure water to the village.

Then she was anxious, under the circumstances, not to leave any little debts unpaid, and to put her house in order, so that on their return, if they did return, it might look clean and comfortable.

All this occupied her the whole day,

and she determined to start the following morning.

But how to get to St. Peter's was a difficult question to answer. She must make her way by cross-country roads, where there were no waggons or coaches of which she could avail herself.

It was a long journey, and she had to carry a large bag, containing her own and her husband's things, and her heart almost sank within her as she thought of the task before her.

But Mary Basford was not a woman to be daunted by difficulties or dangers. She thought it possible that she might fall in with her husband on the road; she felt certain that he would take a roundabout route, bearing gradually round to the north-east in the direction of Crosdale, and that was her own destination, before she could hit upon the road leading to Saint Peter's.

She went amongst her neighbours, and enquired if they knew of anyone who was going with a cart in the direction of Crosdale, and after a good deal of trouble she found that a butcher at Drawbridge was going to fetch some sheep which he had bought from a farmer a mile or two from Crosdale, and she bargained with him to take herself and bag that far.

The butcher came to the door at daylight. He had arranged some clean straw at the bottom of the cart, and put a chair in it for Mrs. Basford. Her bag (in which was hidden away one of little George's jackets by way of memorial) was put on the clean straw, and they started, with every promise of fine weather, in the direction of Crosdale. In a basket she had provided a substantial meal both for herself and the butcher, together with a glass for water, as she knew there was

little chance of getting any refreshment on the road.

Many a jolt and shake had Mrs. Basford to undergo as they traversed cross-country roads, in some places little better than bridle roads; sometimes getting into a deep rut, which required all the strength of the butcher, added to that of his horse and sometimes that of Mrs. Basford also, to get the wheel out of it; sometimes fording a stream, with the water up to the horse's belly, and at one place being nearly swept away by the strength of the current; then a bit of road over rocky ground, where the cart seemed as if it would be battered and banged all to pieces; then coming to a track over a morass, where the horse sank to to his fetlocks in the soft slimy peat, and could scarcely drag the cart at all.

However, after many hours' exertion, and sundry declarations by the butcher that he would rather go fifty miles round than

come the same way back, and that he rather thought he had got a "Yorkshire bite" in the purchase of the sheep, they arrived at the farm where the sheep were.

The butcher thanked Mrs. Basford very heartily for the good meal she had provided for him, without which he would have been without food all day, and refused to accept the proffered fare for the ride.

When Mrs. Basford shouldered the bag to start on her way to Crosdale she felt how great a kindness she had received from the butcher in giving her a seat in his cart.

She thankfully walked into Crosdale, and it was not until she got fairly into the town that she felt the difficulty of her position.

She did not know a single person there, and it was getting late. She was tired, hungry, and sleepy. She sat down on the

steps of the Parish Church, and cried from the feeling of desolation which crept over her. She remained there, not knowing what to do, until the clock struck nine, when she shook herself together, and rising from the cold stone determined to seek a lodging for the night somewhere.

She asked several decently dressed women where she could get a lodging.

They all said they did not know.

On putting the question the last time a woman of bloated appearance overheard her, and said,—

"I know of a place where thou can'st stay the night."

"Is it clean and respectable," asked Mrs. Basford.

"None better i'th' town," replied the woman, and leading the way Mrs. Basford followed her into a narrow street leading off the main street, in the latter of which a cattle fair had been held that day.

Readers accustomed to the amenities of a well regulated town will be startled to hear that a cattle fair had been held in the principal street of a large town, for such Crosdale was, and that it was held there weekly.

But manorial rights are sacred things in these modern days. They are significant of power, the power of property, the feudalism of the past, and, exercised as they should be, and in most cases are, they represent the grand seigneur and his vassals, *minus* the vassalage and vexatious demands.

Civilization marches behind old Time, and holds the handle whilst he wields the scythe.

A bride is no longer snatched from the arms of her expectant husband. A widow no longer mourns, in addition to the greater loss, the confiscation of the favourite horse, and best cow, and fattest sheep.

Upon fair days the main street of Crosdale was almost impassable—disorder, dirt, bad language, and brute force reigned supreme.

Turning the handle of a street door the woman called out,

"Miles, here's a lodger for thee."

A man came downstairs, and looking at Mrs. Basford in an impudent manner, asked how long she wanted to stay.

"Only one night," said she, "I'm on my way to join my husband at Evendale."

"Thou can'st have a bed, woman," he said, and shewed her upstairs into a room with a low roof and uninviting bed.

Mrs. Basford instinctively disliked the man and the place, but she had no alternative but to remain.

She said that she had had no food since noon, and would be glad of something to eat.

He told her she must come downstairs

if she wanted supper, and she followed him into a badly lighted room, where he told her to sit down and he would fetch her something.

There were two men in the room and a dissipated-looking female. The latter rose and tried to enter into conversation, but Mrs. Basford shrank from her.

It appeared from the conversation of the men that they had brought some cattle for sale in the market, and having disposed of them, they were going home next morning early in the light cart in which they had driven over, and would pass near the southerly end of Evendale, to which they contemptuously alluded as "a stupid old place."

The landlord brought in the supper, consisting of cold meat and bread, and which looked so little tempting that Mrs. Basford, hungry as she was, felt inclined to put it aside.

After eating all the bread and a portion of the meat, she rose to seek her bedroom, and at the foot of the stairs met the woman who had brought her there, and who was the wife of Miles, and saying "Good night," was about to go upstairs, when the woman asked her where she was going next day.

At first she felt inclined not to tell her, but thinking for a moment of the difficulty of reaching Evendale on foot, and the conversation of the two men, she was induced to say where she was going, and that she scarcely knew how to get there.

"Why," said the woman, with a wicked look, which Mrs. Basford was too tired and sleepy to notice, "arn't Bill Harris and Dick Jones going nigh Evendale first thing to-morrow in their cart, and they'll take thee for a trifle."

Mrs. Basford expressed her thanks, and

said she would feel obliged if she would ask the men and let her know.

A few minutes afterwards the woman came into her room and said the men would take her for half-a-crown, which she gladly agreed to pay, and they would start at six o'clock.

Mrs. Basford had some misgiving about the men, and asked the woman if they were "decent men," and being assured that they were, she felt content and went to bed.

At six o'clock she was ready. The light two-wheeled cart was brought to the door, and she got in at the back, where there were two side seats, the two men sitting in the front.

Mrs. Basford was in hopes that she would get to the foot of Evendale about noon at the latest.

Before leaving Crosdale the men called at a low tavern in the outskirts of the

town and remained some time, Mrs. Basford at their request holding the reins.

When they came out they were accompanied by the landlord, who offered to "take five to four against the brindled dog, and to stand even on the black un," and after much talk the bets were taken in crowns, and the men got in and drove off.

Mrs. Basford gathered from the conversation that a great dog fight was to come off on the landlord's premises in a few days, and she began to feel rather uncomfortable as to the character of her companions, especially as their talk was intermingled with oaths, and she perceived that, early as it was, they had been drinking spirits. They drove but slowly, except that now and then, when they came to a very steep descent, they would urge their horse down it at its utmost speed, as if utterly regardless of their own necks or Mrs. Basford's.

They made a stoppage at every road side tavern, urging Mrs. Basford to join them in their potations, which she always declined, while at last she saw they were on the verge of being mad drunk, and became alarmed as they frequently turned round to her and uttered expressions incoherent from drink.

She would have got out if she could, but on her requesting them to stop and let her do so, they laughed loudly and whipped on their horse at a fast pace until they got amongst the hills which betokened the entrance to Evendale.

One of them then got off the front seat, and sat on the vacant side seat opposite to Mrs. Basford.

This greatly increased her alarm. They were both powerful men, and there was not a house in sight, and the sun was sinking fast below the horizon.

"Well, Missus," hiccuped out the man

who had seated himself opposite to her, "pay thy fare, wilt thou; we are nigh the place where thou wilt have to get out."

Mrs. Basford drew her purse from her pocket with fear and trembling, and took out the amount, which she gave him, and immediately returned the purse to her pocket.

"Well, thou need not be in such a hurry," said the man, "to pocket thy purse again; let's have a look inside," and with that held out his hand.

Mrs. Basford replied firmly,

"That's my husband's purse, and this is his bag," pointing to it, "and thou shalt have neither as long as I've life in my body."

"Here's a go, Bill," said the man to his companion; "she won't let me look inside her purse."

"D—— her eyes," said the other. "Take

it, man, and with that he pulled up his horse.

"Pull her out o'th' cart."

The one opposite to her stood up and seized her by the neck, whilst the other man laid hold of her legs, and they were in the act of dragging her out of the cart, when a man in a black rabbit-skin cap darted like lighting from the sidepath, and with one blow from a hedge-stake felled the miscreant in the road to the earth, and with a second blow sent the other senseless over the edge of the cart, head downwards. To make all safe he repeated the blows, and stretching out his arms lifted the half-fainting woman out of the cart.

It was Richard Basford.

END OF VOL. I.

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